

Biblical Passages That Refer to God's Fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant And a Brief Explanation of Each One

by
Earle Craig

Part 3

Isaiah

THE GREATNESS OF ISRAEL AND THE ETERNAL BLESSING OF ABRAHAM AND OTHERS IN THE WORLD ARE FOUND IN GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID OF AN ETERNAL KING WHO WILL RULE OVER THE GREAT NATION OF THE JEWS IN THE PRESENT REALM AND PROVIDE ETERNAL FORGIVENESS OF SINS THROUGH HIS SUFFERING TO ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM

Isaiah 2:1 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2:2 Now it will come about that in the last days
The mountain of the house of Yahweh
Will be established as the chief of the mountains,
And will be raised above the hills;
And all the nations will stream to it.

Isaiah 30:19 O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer.

He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry;
when He hears it, He will answer you.

30:20 Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression,
He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your
Teacher.

30:21 Your ears will hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it,"
whenever you turn to the right or to the left.

30:22 And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver,
and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them
as an impure thing, and say to them, "Be gone!"

30:23 Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground,
and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous;
on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture.

30:24 Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground
will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork.

30:25 On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be
streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

30:26 The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun,
and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter,
like the light of seven days, on the day Yahweh binds up
the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.

Isaiah 2:1-4

- 2:1 The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
- 2:2 Now it will come about that
 In the last days (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים)
 The mountain of the house of Yahweh
 Will be established as the chief of the mountains (בְּרֵאשׁ הַהָרִים),
 And will be raised above the hills;
 And all the nations will stream to it (וַיָּהֲרֹ אֵלָיו כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם).
- 2:3 And many peoples will come and say,
 “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh,
 To the house of the God of Jacob;
 That He may teach us concerning His ways
 And that we may walk in His paths.”
 For the law will go forth from Zion (כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה)
 And the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.
- 2:4 And He will judge between the nations,
 And will render decisions for many peoples;
 And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
 Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
 And never again will they learn war.

Now in Part 3 we move approximately three hundred years beyond David to the prophet Isaiah, *Yeshu' yahu* (יֵשׁוּעָהּ), which means “Yahweh is Salvation.” He is the first of the so-called Major Prophets, because Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are very long in comparison to Hosea through Malachi, the Minor Prophets. The political landscape of Israel has changed dramatically. After Solomon, David’s son, ruled the Jewish people, his son Rehoboam so angered the northern ten tribes (plus priests from the tribe of Levi) that they split off and formed the Kingdom of Israel (an unfortunate name, because the Bible up to his point refers to all the tribes as Israel). This left two tribes (plus priest from the tribe of Levi) in the south to comprise the Kingdom of Judah, ruled by the Davidic king, who is the successor to the Davidic Covenant and who comes from the tribe of Judah. In effect, the northern tribes gave up on the Davidic Covenant, which had grave consequences for them. While some of the ensuing Davidic kings were like Rehoboam and rebelled against God, **all** the kings of the northern Kingdom of Israel were evil and led their subjects away from authentic worship of Yahweh.

In the midst of the spiritually turbulent situation in both kingdoms, God sent multiple prophets, i.e., spokesman on His behalf, to warn the Jews that their disobedience would result in His disciplining them with the curses of Deuteronomy 28. But He also encouraged them that He would remain faithful to His promises to Abraham, Moses, and David. As a result, He would not only make them a “great nation” in the future, but He would also, at the same time, give them a permanent king who would rule over them and the rest of the world, thus bringing about the blessings of Deuteronomy 28. In spite of God’s warnings, the northern kingdom continued without interruption their idolatry and immorality, so that He caused the Gentile empire of the Assyrians to invade and destroy the kingdom and carry off the people into exile in 722 B.C. Then the same thing happened to the southern Kingdom of Judah when God used the Babylonians for His disciplining purposes between 605 and 586 B.C. The Babylonians demolished not only the houses of Jerusalem, but also its temple. And they looted it for its implements of the worship of Yahweh and carried them back to Babylon. While the exiles from the northern Kingdom of Israel never returned *en masse*, those from Judah were allowed to do so 70 years later by Cyrus, king of Persia, who had conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. These Israelites from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi built a shabby copy of the temple which survived until, in the days of Jesus, Herod the Great replaced it with a magnificent edifice, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. However, in response to the first revolt by the Jews, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and Herod’s temple in A.D. 70.

Isaiah begins his book by saying that he has presented his teachings “during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah” (cf. Isaiah 1:1). These men ruled the southern kingdom from 792-686 B.C. Assuming Isaiah’s time as a prophet lasted forty years, this would mean that he prophesied to mainly the people of Judah between about 740 and 700 B.C. However, he also describes the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians. We will see this when we look at chapter 8. In the passage above, Isaiah 2:1-4, all the work that we have done in Part 1 and Part 2 regarding the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants allows us to recognize what the prophet is talking about—the millennial kingdom when the nation of Israel with their Messiah and permanent king will rule the world. Isaiah begins this chapter in v. 1, “The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” Thus we know that God and he are referring to the southern Kingdom of Judah even if the northern kingdom is still in existence.

Isaiah goes on in v. 2, “Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of Yahweh will be established as the chief of the mountains and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it.” The phrase “in the last days” is used at least twelve times in the Old Testament. We saw in Part 1 that, before he dies, Jacob uses it to describe to his sons what the future of their tribal descendants will be like. Here, Isaiah is clearly speaking of a time in history when the nation of Israel becomes so great that Yahweh builds up Jerusalem and the Temple Mount which rises above it to the extent that there is no more important place on earth. This is striking when we think only of the geographical characteristics of the temple mount. It is a mere 2,000 feet above sea level while, for example, Mt. Everest is 29,000 feet high. Yet, eventually the Temple Mount will be higher than the highest mountain in the world, not in actual physical height, but in political, military, instructional, and moral strength, power, and quality. In our day, it can be said that Washington D.C., a former swamp on the Potomac River, is “the chief of the mountains” of the world because of the power and authority of the United States in comparison to other countries in the world. However, there will come a moment in human history when God will cause the Jews and their capital city, Jerusalem, to grow in strength so that they dominate the world. Their lowly mountain on which the temple will sit will be the “highest” place in the world, and “all the nations will stream to it.” This latter phrase is best interpreted in the light of the next verses.

Isaiah continues in v. 3, “And many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.” Why will Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, the “house of the God of Jacob,” be so great and powerful? Because “many peoples” from among the Gentile nations will recognize that Israel is the very center of God’s instructions about the nature of reality, thereby making it also the very center of His power and rule. God’s “law,” the Hebrew word *torah* (תּוֹרָה), which is better translated instruction or teaching, will be sounding forth from Jerusalem, and it will provide the whole world with the correct information about how to live life well, how to “walk” in God’s “ways” and in “His paths.” People will long to increase the moral quality of their behavior so as to match God’s commandments, and they will long to be taught how to do so by the Jews. As a result, the nation of Israel will finally be the “kingdom of priests” who teach and demonstrate biblical wisdom, which God predicted in Exodus 19:6. And whoever can find access either physically or intellectually to the minds of the Jews in Israel will gain the understanding they need of God and biblical morality to obey God as the Jews will be doing so on the land of Israel.

Another possible interpretation of v.3 is that the gospel as the instruction of God will go forth from Jerusalem to the Gentile nations after Jesus’ first appearance and the evangelistic efforts of his apostles, especially of Paul, the unique apostle to the Gentiles. This will result in the Christian church and eventually eternal life in heaven for them. However, the context points towards the first option in the previous paragraph, as the next verse goes on to show.

This passage ends in v. 4, “And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.” The time of

Israel's ascendancy will also be a time of perpetual peace among the entire nations of the world. Yahweh will step in immediately and settle any disputes between them before they even think about taking up arms against one another. Indeed, there will be no need for any country to raise an army and manufacture weapons because God and His just decisions in regard to their arguments with each other will be their peacekeeper. The Gentile nations will never equip themselves or train for war against one another again.

The only time that this prediction makes sense to be fulfilled is what we have already learned from the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant passages in Genesis through the Psalms. It is when the Messiah as the final king of Israel restores their kingdom and establishes his rule over the earth as if the transcendent creator Himself were governing the world. And this will be when Jesus returns. He will speak directly for Yahweh, rule for Yahweh, and decide who is right and who is wrong for Yahweh, because he is the very icon and embodiment of God as the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15. However, there is a catch. While Isaiah is saying that the Gentile nations will never again go to war against each another, we find out from Revelation 20 that Satan will deceive them one last time at the end of the millennial kingdom to gear up militarily to try to overthrow Jesus and the Jews who are governing them. But they will obviously fail.

Isaiah 2:5-4:6

2:5 Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of Yahweh.

2:6 For You have abandoned Your people, the house of Jacob,
Because they are filled with influences from the east,
And they are soothsayers like the Philistines,
And they strike bargains with the children of foreigners.

2:7 Their land has also been filled with silver and gold
And there is no end to their treasures;
Their land has also been filled with horses
And there is no end to their chariots.

2:8 Their land has also been filled with idols;
They worship the work of their hands,
That which their fingers have made.

2:9 So the common man has been humbled
And the man of importance has been abased,
But do not forgive them.

2:10 Enter the rock and hide in the dust
From the terror of Yahweh and from the splendor of His majesty.

2:11 The proud look of man will be abased
And the loftiness of man will be humbled,
And Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day (בְּיוֹם הַקְּרוּאָה).

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

2:13 And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up,
Against all the oaks of Bashan,

2:14 Against all the lofty mountains,
Against all the hills that are lifted up,

2:15 Against every high tower,
Against every fortified wall,

2:16 Against all the ships of Tarshish
And against all the beautiful craft.

2:17 The pride of man will be humbled
And the loftiness of men will be abased;
And Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day (בְּיוֹם הַקְּרוּאָה),

- 2:18 But the idols will completely vanish.
- 2:19 Men will go into caves of the rocks
And into holes of the ground
Before the terror of Yahweh
And the splendor of His majesty,
When He arises to make the earth tremble.
- 2:20 In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) men will cast away to the moles and the bats
Their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
Which they made for themselves to worship,
- 2:21 In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs
Before the terror of Yahweh and the splendor of His majesty,
When He arises to make the earth tremble.
- 2:22 Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils;
For why should he be esteemed?
- 3:1 For behold, the Lord Yahweh of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah
Both supply and support, the whole supply of bread
And the whole supply of water;
- 3:2 The mighty man and the warrior,
The judge and the prophet,
The diviner and the elder,
- 3:3 The captain of fifty and the honorable man,
The counselor and the expert artisan,
And the skillful enchanter.
- 3:4 And I will make mere lads their princes,
And capricious children will rule over them,
- 3:5 And the people will be oppressed,
Each one by another, and each one by his neighbor;
The youth will storm against the elder
And the inferior against the honorable.
- 3:6 When a man lays hold of his brother in his father's house, saying,
"You have a cloak, you shall be our ruler,
And these ruins will be under your charge,"
- 3:7 He will protest on that day, saying,
"I will not be your healer,
For in my house there is neither bread nor cloak;
You should not appoint me ruler of the people."
- 3:8 For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen,
Because their speech and their actions are against Yahweh,
To rebel against His glorious presence.
- 3:9 The expression of their faces bears witness against them,
And they display their sin like Sodom;
They do not even conceal it.
Woe to them!
For they have brought evil on themselves.
- 3:10 Say to the righteous (צַדִּיק) that it will go well with them,
For they will eat the fruit of their actions.
- 3:11 Woe to the wicked (רָשָׁע)! It will go badly with him,
For what he deserves will be done to him.
- 3:12 O My people! Their oppressors are children,
And women rule over them.
O My people! Those who guide you lead you astray
And confuse the direction of your paths.
- 3:13 Yahweh arises to contend,
And stands to judge the people.

- 3:14 Yahweh enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people,
 “It is you who have devoured the vineyard;
 The plunder of the poor is in your houses.
- 3:15 “What do you mean by crushing My people
 And grinding the face of the poor?”
 Declares the Lord Yahweh of hosts.
- 3:16 Moreover, Yahweh said, “Because the daughters of Zion are proud
 And walk with heads held high and seductive eyes,
 And go along with mincing steps
 And tinkle the bangles on their feet,
- 3:17 Therefore the Lord will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs,
 And Yahweh will make their foreheads bare.”
- 3:18 In that day (בְּיָוֶם הַהוּא) the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets,
 headbands, crescent ornaments,
- 3:19 dangling earrings, bracelets, veils,
 3:20 headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets,
 3:21 finger rings, nose rings,
 3:22 festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money purses,
 3:23 hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans and veils.
- 3:24 Now it will come about that instead of sweet perfume there will be putrefaction;
 Instead of a belt, a rope;
 Instead of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp;
 Instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth;
 And branding instead of beauty.
- 3:25 Your men will fall by the sword
 And your mighty ones in battle.
- 3:26 And her gates will lament and mourn,
 And deserted she will sit on the ground.
- 4:1 For seven women will take hold of one man in that day (בְּיָוֶם הַהוּא), saying,
 “We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes,
 only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!”
- 4:2 In that day (בְּיָוֶם הַהוּא) the Branch of Yahweh will be beautiful and glorious,
 and the fruit of the earth (וּפְרֵי הָאָרֶץ) will be the pride
 and the adornment of the survivors of Israel (לְפִלִּיטַת יִשְׂרָאֵל).
- 4:3 It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains
 in Jerusalem will be called holy —
 everyone who is recorded for life (כָּל־הַכְּתוּב לְחַיִּים) in Jerusalem.
- 4:4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion
 and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst,
 by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning,
- 4:5 then Yahweh will create over the whole area of Mount Zion
 and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke,
 and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy.
- 4:6 There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day,
 and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.

The difficulty in interpreting the prophets who lived and spoke before the Assyrian invasion of the northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. and the Babylonian invasion of the southern Kingdom of Judah in 605 B.C. is that their words of doom and gloom, in response to the Jews’ rebellion against God, could refer to one of these two events, or they could refer to the end of the present age which is still future to us and just before the Messiah returns and restores the Davidic Kingdom. It seems to me that the above passage of Isaiah 2:5-4:6 is speaking of this last event, when God will complete His discipline of the nation of Israel and Jesus returns. Isaiah 13:6 is the first passage in the Old

Testament to speak of “The Day of the Lord,” which in its context probably refers to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. But then Malachi 4:5 uses the phrase, “The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord” to refer to the final judgment of God on the Jews immediately before the appearance of the Messiah to establish his kingdom. And it makes sense to include verses that speak of God’s judgment on the Jews with verses that relate directly to His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation” because of Deuteronomy 28-30. We saw in Part 1 that these chapters list the curses God will inflict on His people, including banishment from their land, as well as the blessings which He will eventually grant them in line with the Abrahamic Covenant. Therefore, as we consider passages in the prophetic books of Isaiah through Malachi that pertain to the Abrahamic Covenant, we will find it helpful to include verses of both kinds, of curses and of blessings, which comprise the same context. The general pattern of these passages will be the following. God will first promise judgment on the Jews through suffering defeat at the hands of their enemies because of their rebellion against Him. And then He will promise salvation, prosperity, and victory over their enemies because either explicitly or implicitly He refers to His covenant with Abraham. We certainly find this pattern in our current passage.

As Isaiah 2:6-8 indicate, the people of Judah in Isaiah’s day are “filled with influences” from their pagan and idolatrous neighbors outside the land of Israel. Their bank accounts are “filled with silver and gold,” and their military is relatively strong with “horses” and “chariots.” Plus, they are worshipping “idols” and the “the work of their hands.” Nevertheless, these could be references to the situation in Israel in our own time and future to us when God’s people are focused more on making money as that which they think brings them a sense of life and satisfaction, while also building up their military to protect themselves from their enemies, and thus placing more faith and trust in themselves and their own accomplishments than in their God, Yahweh.

In addition, vs. 9-12 mention that those who directly heard Isaiah’s words in the southern kingdom were “humbled” and “abased” by the Babylonian invasion, so that they had to “enter the rock [caves near Jerusalem] and hide in the dust from the terror of Yahweh and from the splendor of His majesty.” The result was that “Yahweh alone” was “exalted in that day.” But in v. 11 we encounter a phrase which gets repeated five more times in the rest of this long passage. The phrase is “in that day” (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) (*bayyom hahu*) in Hebrew, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ (*en tay haymera ekeinay*) in the Greek Septuagint). Assuming “that day” is the same period of time in each of its five uses in this passage, I think that, especially because of Isaiah 4:2-6, it makes more sense to interpret it as the return of the Messiah, Jesus, and God’s fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to transform the people of Israel into the most powerful nation in history. So we will proceed along these lines and look next at these last verses of the passage, 4:2-6, and then come back to v. 12 of chapter 3.

In Isaiah 4:2, the prophet says, “In that day the Branch of Yahweh will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.” The NAS95 as quoted capitalizes the first letter of Branch, probably because they understand the prophet to speaking of the Messiah as Jeremiah clearly does in 23:5, “Behold, the days are coming,” declares Yahweh, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and he will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land.” However, we notice that Isaiah 4:2 places the “branch of Yahweh” in parallel with “the fruit of the earth.” Therefore, I think that it is better here to interpret “branch” (צֶמַח) (*tzemah*) in Hebrew) as the produce (wheat, corn, vegetables, etc.) of the land of Israel which is being grown for the benefit of the Jews. Nevertheless, even though “branch” is not referring to the Messiah, I still think that Isaiah is still making a statement about the messianic kingdom, because it will be during it that God will bring about abundant prosperity for His people. There will be plenty of food for “the survivors of Israel,” the Jews who are still alive after “the terror of Yahweh” has struck Israel in the form of the Beast of Revelation (cf. Revelation 13).

As a result, “It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem” (4:3). This is to say that any Jew who is left in city of Jerusalem, and, by extrapolation, on the land of Israel after God’s destructive judgment and discipline of the Jews will be someone whom God has predestined for life in the promised “great

nation.” He will be a “holy” person, set apart inwardly by God, and someone of genuine belief in both God and the Messiah.

In addition, God will have brought about forgiveness for these remaining Jews, including the women who were those who had used their social status and physical beauty to advance themselves in Jewish community. Isaiah writes in 4:4,5, “4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, 5 then Yahweh will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy.” The “filth of the daughters of Zion” refers to the same women in 3:16-24, those who “are proud and walk with heads held high and seductive steps.” But God has afflicted their scalp “with scabs” and taken away “the beauty of their anklets” and assorted accessories which they have used to enhance their physical appearance. And He will replace them with items that pertain to slaves, including branding. While this happened to the women of Judah when the Babylonians took them into captivity, I think that Isaiah is using language that could pertain to the time of the Babylonians but that refers to The Day of Yahweh when Jesus returns.

Consequently, God will bring about “the spirit of judgment” and “of burning” that cleanses the people of Israel of their sin and turns them away from treating each other such that they have even brought about one another’s death for selfish reasons. This cleansing of sin and elimination of “bloodshed” probably refers both to belief in Jesus and his crucifixion that provides forgiveness from God as well as to God’s activity of judgment and discipline on unbelieving Jews which results in their deaths. In other words, there are two things that are happening to the Jews. Some are being affected by the Spirit of God and receiving new hearts that bring about authentic belief in God and in Jesus. And some are experiencing God’s judgment on earth and losing their lives for their unbelief. Then, v. 5 describes an important outcome—that, as He did for the Israelites when they were crossing the Sinai desert after leaving Egypt, God will protect the Jews from any and all future threats and harm from potential enemies during the entire time that the Messiah reigns over them. This will be during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

Isaiah repeats the same idea in 4:6, “There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.” I think that he is speaking metaphorically. It will not be the sun and rain *per se* from which the nation of Israel will need protection. God will shield the Jews from unbelieving Gentiles who still exist in the world while the Messiah reigns over them, so that no one will be able to attack or harm them as their persecutors have for over two thousand years.

Returning to Isaiah 2:12, we see that God’s salvation of Israel will happen *after* “the day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty, and against everyone who is lifted up, that he may be abased.” This day of reckoning is a day of judgment and retribution which God will direct towards the Jews who have remained hard-hearted and stubborn in their rejection of Him as the Israelites of the Old Testament also were. But, as 4:2-6 indicate, this will be the last time that God disciplines them. And God will leave no one of the people of Israel untouched by His actions. The prophet continues in 2:13-17,

- 2:13 And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up,
 Against all the oaks of Bashan,
 2:14 Against all the lofty mountains,
 Against all the hills that are lifted up,
 2:15 Against every high tower,
 Against every fortified wall,
 2:16 Against all the ships of Tarshish
 And against all the beautiful craft.
 2:17 The pride of man will be humbled
 And the loftiness of men will be abased;

And Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day.

All the land of Israel and all the people of Israel will experience the effects of God's judgment just before the return of the Messiah and he establishes his kingdom with Jews whose hearts God has changed so that they become authentic followers of him. The forests, the mountains, the hills, the fortifications, and the (ungodly) prosperous economy of the people of Israel will experience some sort of detrimental effect and disastrous loss. Their financial system will collapse in ruins. Thus, "the pride of man [the Jews] will be humbled," and their "loftiness" [greatness within world society that they have created apart from God] "will be abased" and reduced to nothing. And this will be so that "Yahweh alone will be exalted in that day" as He completes His disciplinary actions towards His chosen people and demonstrates His sovereign rule and power by defeating their enemies and creating the "great nation" of authentic believing Jews with their Messiah, Jesus, becoming their king.

Isaiah's description of the loss that will occur on the land of Israel continues in 2:18-21,

2:18 But the idols will completely vanish.

2:19 Men will go into caves of the rocks

And into holes of the ground

Before the terror of Yahweh

And the splendor of His majesty,

When He arises to make the earth tremble.

2:20 In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats

Their idols of silver and their idols of gold,

Which they made for themselves to worship,

2:21 In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs

Before the terror of Yahweh and the splendor of His majesty,

When He arises to make the earth tremble.

Taking into consideration the whole context, the vanishing of the idols in v. 18 refers to the people coming to the realization that everything they have counted on to bring them satisfaction, fulfillment, security, and safety in life is worthless. As Isaiah says in v. 20, "In that day men will cast away to the moles and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold which they made for themselves to worship." This is Ancient Near Eastern language to describe how the Jews of the future will all of sudden face into the futility of their self-efforts to acquire long-lasting prosperity and safety in the midst of their enemies. When they see "the terror of Yahweh and the splendor of His majesty" descending upon them in the form of diverse judgments, they will abandon their "idols" and "go into caves of rocks and into holes of the ground," even if this is only metaphorical "when [God] arises to make the earth [the land of Israel] tremble." The Jews will do everything they can to hide from the wrath of God and shield themselves from His power that has come to destroy them. But of course they will fail at avoiding His judgment.

In the light of this new self-realization on the part of the people of Israel, Isaiah next says to them in v. 22, "Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; for why should he be esteemed." As sinners, we human beings take ourselves much too seriously and consider ourselves much more powerful and important than we are. In addition, we take much more credit for our accomplishments than we should, forgetting that even "the breath of life...in [our] nostrils" would not exist unless God caused it to do so at every moment. And it is this arrogant and false understanding of reality that the Jews certainly had in Old Testament times and will still have just before Jesus' return and during The [Final] Day of the Lord.

Isaiah continues in chapter 3 with what God is going to do with His people because of their long-standing rebellion against Him. In v. 1, he says that He will diminish significantly their food supply. In vs. 2-3, he states that the gifted and talented people will disappear, meaning that all their abilities that they could use to protect themselves from their enemies and from God's judgments will be

worthless. Nothing they do will stop God from completing His disciplinary actions towards them. Their leaders will be useless also because God will place “mere lads” and “capricious children,” i.e., immature and foolish people, in authority over them (v. 4). As the apostle Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12, “**11** God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, **12** in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”

The effect of being led by fools is that “the people will be oppressed, each one by another, and each one by his neighbor; the youth will storm against the elder and the inferior against the honorable” (3:5). Rather than bringing unity and like-mindedness to the Jewish culture, the leaders will sow dissension so that everyone will be at each other’s throats, oppressing and fighting each other. Young people will consider their parents and others who are older to be idiots. And those who should humbly recognize that they lack wisdom will think of those who are actually wiser and more knowledgeable than they are as stupid and knowing nothing.

People will long for a good leader but they will not find one who is suitable. Isaiah explains this in vs. 6-7, “**6** When a man lays hold of his brother in his father’s house, saying, ‘You have a cloak, you shall be our ruler, and these ruins will be under your charge,’ **7** he will protest on that day, saying, ‘I will not be your healer, for in my house there is neither bread nor cloak; you should not appoint me ruler of the people.’” I think that the “cloak” and “bread” as clothes and food respectively represent God’s blessing on the man who is being chosen by his “brother” to lead the people of Israel and restore whatever buildings have been destroyed by their enemies. However, the man says that his brother is mistaken. For some reason it may appear as though he has adequate clothing and food, but he does not. His brother is not seeing the situation clearly, which is not unusual among those who go through the kind of trauma which Isaiah is describing here. God has placed this man in a position of deprivation just as much as He has done so to others in Israel. In other words, there are no good leaders available, making it all the clearer that what is needed is the appearance of the final Davidic king.

And why has all this happened to the Jews? Isaiah explains in vs. 8-9, “**8** For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their actions are against Yahweh, to rebel against His glorious presence. **9** The expression of their faces bears witness against them, and they display their sin like Sodom; they do not even conceal it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.” God’s people have willfully chosen to “rebel against” God and His “glorious presence” that is His temple in their capital city, Jerusalem. They are even rebelling in the midst of His commitment to be faithful to them which stretches back as far as 2,000 B.C. and the Abrahamic Covenant. And God’s people are not the least bit ashamed of their sin so that they display the arrogance and moral defiance of “their speech and their actions” right on “their faces.” They are as explicit as the people of Sodom in Genesis 19 just before God destroyed their city. And He is in the process of judging and disciplining Israel so that Isaiah speaks harshly to them with this warning, “Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.” God always holds people accountable for their choices, whether they willingly submit to him with genuine faith or they rebel against Him with stubborn and arrogant hearts. And God is holding His own people, the Jews, accountable as He brings about these last judgments on them immediately before the Messiah appears.

There are two kinds of people in this world. And this is always true on the land of Israel until the Messiah appears and restores the Kingdom of Israel, when all the Jews will become circumcised of heart by God. There are the “righteous” and the “wicked” as Isaiah speaks of them in vs. 10-11, “**10** Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, for they will eat the fruit of their actions. **11** Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, for what he deserves will be done to him.” The “righteous” are the *tzaddeeq* (צַדִּיק), anyone who lives his life with authentic belief in Yahweh and ultimately stands to obtain eternal forgiveness from Him. Isaiah says that “it will go well with” this person. Literally, it will be “good” (*tov*), and “he will eat the fruit of [his] actions,” which means that God will respond to his obedience by gracing him with the same blessing which He will be giving to Abraham for his faith—eternal life.

On the other hand, the “wicked” are the *rasha* (רָשָׁע), anyone who persists in rebelling against God throughout his entire life, even when God displays His displeasure towards Israel and they encounter His disciplinary actions as His chosen people. It will not go well with him. Instead, “it will go badly” (*ra* ‘). While the righteous man obtains what he does not deserve—God’s grace, mercy, and life, the wicked man will receive what he does deserve—God’s wrath, condemnation, and destruction.

On this note, in 3:12, Yahweh speaks to the people of Israel through His prophet, “O My people! Their oppressors are children, and women rule over them. O My people! Those who guide you lead you astray and confuse the direction of your paths.” God is anguished over how His people, the Jews, are being ruled and led. Those who “rule over them” are oppressing them and acting like the women whom Isaiah describes in vs. 16-24 as proud, arrogant, and untouchable by God’s judgments. As a result, those who are governing them “lead [them] astray and confuse the direction of [their] paths.” In other words, there is no reference to the biblical commandments of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants in the thoughts and words of Israel’s leaders. Instead, the ideas they are putting forth for how God’s people should live are foolish and nonsensical. They are leading them down the path of disobedience and destruction, not of genuine, biblical morality and life.

As a result, God has a bone to pick with the Jewish leaders in vs. 13-15, “13 Yahweh arises to contend, and stands to judge the people. 14 Yahweh enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people, ‘It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses. 15 What do you mean by crushing My people and grinding the face of the poor?’ declares the Lord Yahweh of hosts.” Their leaders have abused their power and stolen from the people, especially the poor, probably through excessive taxation and maybe even outright confiscation of property, which obviously the poor cannot afford to have happen to them. Then in vs. 16-24 God addresses the arrogant women of high society among the Jews whom we looked at briefly above.

The upshot of the people’s disobedience towards God will be that the nation of Israel will find that their military fails at protecting them from their enemies, and their enemies will create havoc and devastation in Jerusalem as Isaiah describes in 3:25-26, “25 Your men will fall by the sword and your mighty ones in battle. 26 And her gates will lament and mourn, and deserted she will sit on the ground.” And because of the loss of the men in battle, the women of Israel will find themselves being a majority and will compete with one another for the attention of those men who remain, looking for some level of respect within their culture. Isaiah puts it this way in 4:1, “For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, ‘We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!’”

And the only hope for the nation of Israel is what we have already looked at in 4:2-5, which certainly sounds like God’s fulfillment of His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 of making his descendants a “great nation” and the most powerful country in the world. Therefore, God’s judgment and discipline of the Jews will never have the last say in their story as His chosen people. Instead, it will be their greatness and authority over the entire world when God restores the Kingdom of Israel at the appearance of their Messiah and final Davidic king, whom we now know to be Jesus of Nazareth.

Isaiah 7-12

I suggest that Isaiah 7-12 are a unit, which speaks of the prophet’s contemporaries in the northern Kingdom of Israel, the southern Kingdom of Judah, the Gentile Kingdom of Aram, and the Assyrian Empire. Isaiah 13 will change subjects when the prophet addresses the Babylonians. But Isaiah 7-12 are so important for understanding both God’s faithfulness to the Jews to fulfill His Abrahamic promise to them and His manner of communicating historical events through such prophets as Isaiah that we will examine all six chapters. I hope to show that sometimes God makes it clear that He is addressing either Isaiah’s contemporaries in the 8th century B.C. or Jews who will be living later in history, even during the millennial kingdom after Jesus returns. And sometimes God is not so clear as to when the events which He is describing take place, but, by looking carefully at the textual clues, I think we will still be able to determine the time period of the people to whom each passage refers.

One moment God is predicting oppression and destruction by Israel's enemies many centuries before Jesus first appears, and the next moment He is predicting blessing and *shalom* to the Jews which they will experience after Jesus returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel. And sometimes God pauses in His verbal journey and describes events during the time of Jesus' first appearance. As a result, we learn that, in the prophetic books of Isaiah through Malachi, God is furnishing a broad sweep of Jewish and world history, and He expects His listeners and readers to think carefully enough that they can understand at least approximately when each event will occur.

We begin with the first nine verses of Isaiah 7,

- 7:1 Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it.
- 7:2 When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.
- 7:3 Then Yahweh said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field,
- 7:4 and say to him, 'Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.
- 7:5 'Because Aram, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you, saying,
- 7:6 "Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it.'"
- 7:7 Thus says Adonai Yahweh: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.
- 7:8 For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin (now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, so that it is no longer a people),
- 7:9 and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, you surely shall not last."

Isaiah is both a character within this account and recording it. He tells us that during the reign of Ahaz, who is ruling over the southern Kingdom of Judah, his counterpart in the northern Kingdom of Israel, Pekah, has allied himself with the Gentile king, Rezin, who is ruling Aram, which is north in the area of modern-day Syria. Ahaz ruled Judah from 735-715 B.C., and Pekah was in power over Israel from 752-732 B.C. We can see that their reigns overlap during only the years from 735-732 B.C. Therefore, these initial events are taking place during this three-year span, and Pekah, along with his Gentile ally, Rezin of Aram, is hoping to conquer Judah and replace Ahaz with "the son of Tabeel" (v. 6).

Before we go any further, we should note that the historical background to Isaiah 7-12 is found in 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chronicles 28-32. And I encourage the reader first to look at these accounts in order to obtain as full a picture as possible of the circumstances which Isaiah is describing. These chapters in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles recount the activities of certain kings of the northern Kingdom of Israel, including Pekah, the reigns of certain kings of the southern Kingdom of Judah, including Ahaz, the reign of Rezin, the king of the Aram, and the activities of certain kings of the powerful Assyrian Empire, including Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, and Sennacherib. Sargon, who is king of Assyria between Shalmaneser and Sennacherib, is mentioned in the Old Testament in only Isaiah 20:1.

Here is a brief outline of the main events in Isaiah’s day of Isaiah 7-12,

- A. God sends Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel against Judah (735 B.C.)
- B. Ahaz seeks help from Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria
- C. Tiglath-Pileser captures and exiles the people of Damascus and Aram (732 B.C.)
- D. Shalmaneser of Assyria captures and exiles the people of Samaria and Israel (722 B.C.)
- E. Sennacherib of Assyria invades Judah and seizes many fortified cities (~702 B.C.)
- F. Sennacherib’s army approaches Jerusalem, but God destroys most of his army and they leave (701 B.C.)

And here is a list of key passages and their contents in 2 Kings 15-20 and 2 Chronicles 28-32,

- 2 Kings 15:29 – Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser’s second western campaign (734-732); fall of Damascus
- 2 Kings 15:35 – King Jotham of Judah (750-735) does not remove the high places
- 2 Kings 15:37; 2 Chronicles 28:5-15 – God sends Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, king of northern Kingdom of Israel, against Judah
- 2 Kings 16:2-5; 2 Chronicles 28:1-4 – King Ahaz of Judah is an evil king (cf. Jeremiah 7:31); Rezin and Pekah attack Judah unsuccessfully
- 2 Kings 16:7ff.; 2 Chronicles 28:16-21 – Ahaz seeks help from Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser
- 2 Kings 17:1-6 – Assyrian King Shalmaneser (reigned 727-722) captures Samaria and King Hoshea of northern Israel
- 2 Kings 17:7-23 – The reasons why God drove Israel from the land (quoted below in explanation of Isaiah 10:1-19)
- 2 Chronicles 29-31 – King Hezekiah’s reforms in Judah
- 2 Kings 18:13; 2 Chronicles 32:1-19 – Assyrian King Sennacherib (reigned 705-681 B.C.) invades Judah and seizes fortified cities
- 2 Kings 19:20-37; 2 Chronicles 32:20-23 – God’s answer to Sennacherib and his return to Nineveh (701 B.C.)
- 2 Kings 20:16-18 – Isaiah’s prediction (~700 B.C.) to Hezekiah of the Babylonian exile

And here is a chart to aid in visualizing the above history,

Date B.C.	Prophet	King of Israel	King of Judah	King of Assyria	OT Passage
750	Isaiah (740-700)	Pekah (752-732)	Ahaz (735-715)	Tiglath-Pileser (745-727)	2 Kings 15:27-31; 2 Kings 16
		Hoshea (732-722)		Shalmaneser (727-722) Sargon (722-705)	2 Kings 15:30 & 17
700			Hezekiah (715-687)	Sennacherib (705-681)	2 Kings 18:1-20:21

Returning to Isaiah 7:1-9, God is sending Isaiah to encourage Ahaz and the people of Judah that Pekah and Rezin will fail in their goal of capturing Jerusalem and replacing Ahaz. Isaiah’s son, Shear-jashub, or *She’ar Yashoov*, as I would transliterate the Hebrew שְׁאֵר־יָשׁוּב, accompanies his father. His name means “A Remnant Will Return,” a reference to both the Abrahamic Covenant and God’s *hesed*, or constant faithfulness, which we will examine more closely when we reach Isaiah 10:20. But here in 7:8, God also predicts that fairly soon, “within another 65 years” (by

approximately 660 B.C.), the northern Kingdom of Israel will completely disappear. The sixty-five years probably refer to the total amount of time that the Assyrian Empire will need to invade the northern kingdom, destroy its cities, especially its capital city Samaria, take into exile its inhabitants, the northern ten tribes who are descended from Jacob, and replace these Jews with people from other parts of the empire who will then live on the land.

And God gives Ahaz and the people of Judah a sobering warning at the end of v. 9. He tells them, “If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.” In other words, the Jews in the southern kingdom will experience the same fate as that of the northern kingdom if they continue rebelling against God and disobeying Him the way the Kingdom of Israel has been doing for approximately two hundred years. God will terminate Judah just as He is bringing an end to Israel. And the condition which Judah must fulfill in order to prevent their destruction is belief. They must believe God. But the question is, “Believe Him for what?” I suggest that it is for His promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 and to David in 2 Samuel 7 along with His warnings in Deuteronomy 28. If the people of the southern kingdom believe that God keeps His promises and will eventually make the Jews a “great nation” who will rule the world, then their kingdom will continue to exist. Otherwise, God will bring about their demise as He is doing so to the northern Kingdom of Israel. This is obviously key to understanding all the history of the Jews. They have encountered God’s judgment and discipline time after time according to Deuteronomy 28, because they have not as an entire nation believed God for His faithfulness and His promises according to Genesis 12. However, we are learning from the Old Testament that eventually they will fulfill the necessary condition and will finally become the kind of people whom God has required they be—a nation where each and every Jew is an authentic believer in God and follower of His Messiah.

We should also note that Ahaz of Judah was not a good king. Here are the pertinent verses from 2 Kings 16:2-5 and 2 Chronicles 28:1-4,

2 Kings 16:2 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of Yahweh his God, as his father David had done.

16:3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh had driven out from before the sons of Israel.

16:4 He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

2 Chronicles 28:1 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do right in the sight of Yahweh as David his father had done.

28:2 But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; he also made molten images for the Baals.

28:3 Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom Yahweh had driven out before the sons of Israel.

28:4 He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on the hills and under every green tree.

Ahaz in Judah chose to act just like all the past and current kings in Israel to his north. Not only did Ahaz worship the pagan gods of former indigenous peoples of the land of Israel, whom God had expelled from the former land of Canaan, but he also sacrificed his own children to them. Therefore, God’s warning to believe and obey Him is in the midst of Ahaz’s own unbelief and rebellion against Him. This means, too, that God’s assurance that Rezin’s and Pekah’s attempts to overthrow him will fail is a total act of grace and mercy on His part. Ahaz does not deserve God’s protection from these kings. In fact, he deserves exactly what will happen to them—the destruction of their kingdoms at the hands of the Assyrians. But God in His patient grace will preserve the southern Kingdom of Judah for another one hundred years. And then His patience will run out, and the Babylonians will invade and destroy Judah and Jerusalem—just as God’s patience with the Jews will eventually run out sometime

future to us, and the Beast of Revelation will invade and attack Israel just before Jesus returns. With this in mind, we continue with the rest of chapter 7,

- 7:10 Then Yahweh spoke again to Ahaz, saying,
 7:11 “Ask a sign for yourself from Yahweh your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”
 7:12 But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, nor will I test Yahweh!”
 7:13 Then he said, “Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?
 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a young woman will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.
 7:15 “He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.
 7:16 “For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.
 7:17 “Yahweh will bring on you, on your people, and on your father’s house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria.”
 7:18 In that day (בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא) Yahweh will whistle for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.
 7:19 They will all come and settle on the steep ravines, on the ledges of the cliffs, on all the thorn bushes and on all the watering places.
 7:20 In that day (בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא) the Lord will shave with a razor, hired from regions beyond the Euphrates (that is, with the king of Assyria), the head and the hair of the legs; and it will also remove the beard.
 7:21 Now in that day (בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא) a man may keep alive a heifer and a pair of sheep;
 7:22 and because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left within the land will eat curds and honey.
 7:23 And it will come about in that day (בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא), that every place where there used to be a thousand vines, valued at a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns.
 7:24 People will come there with bows and arrows because all the land will be briars and thorns.
 7:25 As for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample.

As a way to encourage Ahaz that He will be faithful to Judah if they remain faithful to Him, God provides Ahaz with an opportunity to ask Him for a sign. The implication is that, if the sign occurs exactly as Ahaz requests, then God is completely trustworthy and will keep His promises. However, Ahaz, in spite of being the evil king that he is, is reluctant to ask for a sign and thereby “test Yahweh” (v. 12). Nevertheless, God gives him one of His own. And Isaiah goes on to rebuke all the people of the southern kingdom for their disobedience, because they are trying God’s patience. Then, he tells them what sign God is giving them Ahaz and them.

I have changed the translation of the Hebrew word *‘almah* (עַלְמָנָה) from “virgin” to “young woman” because the next verses make it clear that God is referring to a female in the day of King Ahaz of Judah, to whom He is speaking. Perhaps the girl is a virgin, but it is noteworthy that God does not use the word *bethulah* (בְּתוּלָה), which Genesis 24:16 clearly demonstrates means virgin, “24:16 The girl [Rebekah] was very beautiful, a virgin (*bethulah*, בְּתוּלָה), and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.” Or perhaps she is married and already has at least one child. But verses 15-17 unquestionably state that she lives during the time of Ahaz,¹

- 7:15 “He will eat curds and honey at the time he knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.
 7:16 “For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good,

¹ For a more complete explanation of Isaiah 7:4-8:4 and their relationship to Matthew 1:22-23, see chapter 8, “A Single Level Meaning,” by Jack Crabtree in the *The Language of God: A Commonsense Approach to Understanding and Applying the Bible*, NavPress, 2001.

the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

7:17 “Yahweh will bring on you, on your people, and on your father’s house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah—the king of Assyria.”

The “He” of v. 15 is the young boy born at the time of Ahaz and whose name is Immanuel, which means “God with us.” God declares that before he is old enough to make conscious moral choices, the two kings, Pekah of the northern Kingdom of Israel and Rezin of the Kingdom of Aram, along with their subjects will abandon their own countries. Why? Because the Assyrian Empire will destroy these kingdoms. There will be one more king after Pekah, Hoshea, who will rule the northern Kingdom of Israel from 732-722 B.C. But Assyria will begin its incursions into Aram and Israel as Pekah’s reign ends, and they will conquer Aram and Damascus by 732 B.C.

Isaiah also indicates to Ahaz that the Assyrians are going to create great problems for the southern Kingdom of Judah, events of such a serious nature that nothing like them has happened since the Jews of the northern tribes of Israel split from Judah and formed their own kingdom, which was around 900 B.C. Since that time, there has been antipathy and hostility between the two groups of Jews. Soon, Assyria is going to demonstrate even greater hostility towards the southern kingdom. However, in v. 18 we encounter the first of eight uses of the phrase “in that day” in chapters 7-12. In chapters 2 and 4, we saw that with these words God and the prophet were referring to Jesus’ return and the ensuing millennial kingdom. Is it the same here in chapters 7-12 with this phrase? Notice the flow of the sentences in 7:17-25, which I repeat below,

- 7:17 “Yahweh will bring on you, on your people, and on your father’s house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria.”
- 7:18 In that day Yahweh will whistle for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.
- 7:19 They will all come and settle on the steep ravines, on the ledges of the cliffs, on all the thorn bushes and on all the watering places.
- 7:20 In that day the Lord will shave with a razor, hired from regions beyond the Euphrates (that is, with the king of Assyria), the head and the hair of the legs; and it will also remove the beard.
- 7:21 Now in that day a man may keep alive a heifer and a pair of sheep;
- 7:22 and because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left within the land will eat curds and honey.
- 7:23 And it will come about in that day, that every place where there used to be a thousand vines, valued at a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns.
- 7:24 People will come there with bows and arrows because all the land will be briars and thorns.
- 7:25 As for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample.

Because the phrase “in that day” in v. 18 follows immediately after Isaiah’s statement in v. 17 that God will bring the Assyrians into the picture to discipline both the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah, and because the same phrase in vs. 20, 21, & 23 appear to be referring to the same event, I think it is better to interpret Isaiah as referring to his own time period near the end of the 8th century B.C. Thus, “in that day,” i.e., when the Assyrians invade and continue their occupation and destructive actions within both kingdoms, Judah’s vineyards will be destroyed, but the people will still have enough milk and food, i.e., “curds and honey” (v. 22). There will be “briars and thorns” in the vineyard fields, but at least the Jews of Judah will be able to use the hills “for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample” and graze. Nevertheless, the fact that the child of Ahaz’s day is named Immanuel, i.e., “God with us,” is part of the sign that God will not abandon Judah if they are willing to be obedient to Him. Because God is faithful to His promises to the Jews, He will be “with” them for a while, protecting them from the Assyrians, who, in 701 B.C., will unexpectedly retreat from Judah and return to their city of Nineveh in what is modern-day northern Iraq (cf. 2 Kings 19).

However, we also know from the Bible that the sign of Immanuel (“God with us”) eventually runs its course, and the Babylonians destroy Judah and Jerusalem approximately one hundred years later.

Now we reach Isaiah 8, and we will look at its three sections, vs. 1-10, vs. 11-15, and vs. 16-22. Here are vs. 1-10,

- 8:1 Then Yahweh said to me, “Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters:
Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey.
- 8:2 “And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest
and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.”
- 8:3 So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son.
Then Yahweh said to me, “Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz
[Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey];
- 8:4 for before the boy knows how to cry out ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’
the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away
before the king of Assyria.”
- 8:5 Again Yahweh spoke to me further, saying,
- 8:6 “Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah
And rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah;
- 8:7 “Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the
Euphrates, even the king of Assyria and all his glory;
And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks.
- 8:8 “Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through,
It will reach even to the neck;
And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.
- 8:9 “Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered;
And give ear, all remote places of the earth (כָּל מְרִמְקֵי-אֲרָץ).
Gird yourselves, yet be shattered;
Gird yourselves, yet be shattered.
- 8:10 “Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted;
State a proposal, but it will not stand,
For God is with us.”

Notice how chapter 8 follows immediately after the four uses of the phrase “in that day” near the end of chapter 7 in vs. 18, 20, 21, & 23. And we also see that God is speaking to Isaiah about events in his own day, because He refers to Uriah the priest, a man named Zechariah (not the later Old Testament prophet), Rezin of Aram, and the king of the northern Kingdom of Israel. Therefore, I think that Isaiah is describing the Assyrian invasion and destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., along with the army’s ruinous actions in Judah. The prophet also tells us that he has a son whom he names according to God’s instructions. The Hebrew words for his name are *mahayr shalal hash baz* (מַהֲרַיִם שָׁלַל חָשׁ בָּז). The NAS95 translates them, “Swift is the booty; speedy is the prey.” This could either straightforwardly refer to the short time it will take the Assyrians to inflict damage on the Jews, or ironically refer to the lack of speed with which the Jews will flee from the Assyrians so that the northern kingdom falls to them in 722 B.C. and the southern kingdom is almost destroyed a few years later. The Greek Septuagint translates the name *oxeos pronomayn poiaysai skulon* (ὄξεως προνομὴν ποιῆσαι σκύλων), literally “to make plunder of the spoils quickly.” Therefore, I think that the first option is correct, that God is going to bring swift judgment and harm on especially Aram and the Kingdom of Israel, and then the southern kingdom will barely escape the same destruction. Indeed, we know that, by 701 B.C., Assyria overran forty-six walled cities and laid waste to much of the countryside of Judah, the land of the boy Immanuel, who must have grown up to see the Assyrian army approaching within a few miles of the gates of Jerusalem.

In v. 6, God refers to the source of water for Jerusalem, “the gently flowing waters of *Shiloah*” [שִׁלּוֹחַ (from the Hebrew word for “send,” *shalah* (שָׁלַח)); *Siloam* (Σιλωαμ) in the Septuagint]. King Ahaz and the people of the city have “rejected” these waters. Instead, they “rejoice in Rezin and the

son of Remaliah,” the king of the northern kingdom. Probably a better translation is that they “rejoice over” what is happening to Rezin and Pekah, who have threatened to invade Judah and attack Jerusalem. But the Assyrians will make sure they do not, and the people of Jerusalem are ecstatic over their salvation by the Assyrians. However, God is rebuking them by implying that He has provided them with their water, “the gently flowing waters of *Shiloah*,” and yet they are putting more trust in Assyria than in Him. Therefore, God is going “to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, even the king of Assyria and all his glory” (v. 7). In other words, God will discipline the people of the southern Kingdom of Judah for their lack of faith and obedience to Him by using the same instrument of judgment that He will employ on the northern kingdom.

Nevertheless, there is hope, so that it is vital that we consider the last two verses of this paragraph, Isaiah 8:9-10. The prophet turns his attention away from the Jews to the Gentiles who live in “all the remote places of the earth.” The Hebrew words are *kol merhaqqay ’aretz* (כָּל מְרַחֲקַי אֶרֶץ). And the Greek Septuagint translates them *heos eskatou tays gays* (ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς), meaning “until the end of the earth.” Jeremiah and Ezekiel will use similar words, both to refer to the places from which God will gather the Jews who will inhabit the messianic kingdom (cf. Jeremiah 31:8, “from the remote parts of the earth”) and to refer to the place from which God will bring an army to invade Israel immediately before the Messiah’s return (cf. Ezekiel 38-39, “from the remote parts of the north”). Similar phrases are found both in Jeremiah 6:22, which probably refers to the Babylonian destruction of Judah early in the 6th century B.C., and in Jeremiah 25:32, which may be about the armies who will invade Israel just before Jesus returns. There is also Jeremiah 50:41, which refers to the destruction of Babylon by Persia in 539 B.C. It is striking that Persia is referred to as coming “from the remote parts of the earth” when it is just east of Babylonian Empire on the other side of the Zagros Mountains. This helps us realize that long distances in Isaiah’s and Jeremiah’s day were not as long as they are in our day. Understanding the perspective of the Old Testament prophets when they use such language will be important when we look at, for example, Ezekiel 38-39.

Here in Isaiah 8:9-10, the prophet is warning all of Israel’s enemies, who would plan to invade their land and destroy them completely, that they will fail, because God will protect the Jews from all attempts to annihilate them. Isaiah says that this is because “God is with us,” i.e., “Immanuel.” Thus he refers to the young boy of Isaiah 7:14 whom God predicted would be born as a sign of His constant faithfulness to His chosen people. Instead of the Gentiles’ succeeding in wiping the Jews off the earth, God will cause them to lose their own lives. They will “gird” themselves for battle, but they will “be shattered” by the God of Israel. Therefore, these two verses probably refer to all enemies of the Jews who live throughout the rest of history, starting with Assyria and including the Nazis and finally the Beast of Revelation, who is the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2. The whole world could attempt to rid mankind of the Jews, but the fact that “God is with [them]” means that the whole world would fail. God is committed to fulfilling His promise of Genesis 12ff. to Abraham’s descendants through Isaac and Jacob to make them the most powerful nation in history when their Messiah appears to restore the Kingdom of Israel and rule over the entire earth.

Next, in vs. 11-15, God turns his attention first to Isaiah with a warning to him, but with the intention that the people of Jerusalem are also His audience,

8:11 For thus Yahweh spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,

8:12 “You are not to say, ‘It is a conspiracy!’

In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy,
And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.

8:13 “It is Yahweh of hosts whom you should regard as holy.

And He shall be your fear,
And He shall be your dread.

8:14 “Then He shall become a sanctuary;

But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,
And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

8:15 “Many will stumble over them,
Then they will fall and be broken;
They will even be snared and caught.”

Apparently, the Jews in Jerusalem are more afraid of human beings than they are of God. Of course, this is not uncommon among the rest of us, and we need to remind ourselves of what God is teaching the Jews of Isaiah’s day. They fear the secret (or not so secret) plots and schemes of the Arameans, of their fellow Israelites in the northern kingdom, and especially of the cruel and merciless Assyrians more than they believe the revealed promises and warnings of their God, Yahweh (v. 1). As a result, God warns Isaiah to shun the perspective of his fellow Jews in Judah and “regard” only Him as “holy,” i.e., as the unique being who is worth setting apart in his mind from other persons and trusting instead of them. But the verbs in these verses such as “You are not to say” in v. 12 and “you should regard” in v. 13 are plural and not singular. If God is exhorting only Isaiah, then why is He using the plural “you” in Hebrew instead of the singular? I think that it is because He is warning all the Jews, especially those in Jerusalem and the surrounding area of Judah. It is “Yahweh of hosts” whom they must “fear” and be in “dread” so as to avoid His judgment.

In v. 14, God says of Himself literally, “And He shall be a holy place,” i.e., a *miqdosh* (מִקְדָּשׁ), which is translated “sanctuary.” God is the only one to whom the Jews should go for life, sustenance, water, and protection from their enemies. Certainly, their fellow Jews participate in the process of providing them with their physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual needs, but they (and we) should never forget that ultimately it is God who is the source of all good things for human existence. We trust people to use their giftedness and strengths to furnish us with, for example, available food and water, but our REAL TRUST is in God for all things. This is what makes Him a *miqdosh*, a “holy place.”

The Greek Septuagint adds the clause, “if you trust in Him.” This is to say, “If you trust in God, then He will be your holy place of provision.” Even if the Hebrew text which the Septuagint translators used around 270 B.C. did not contain this “if” clause, their interpretation is correct, because God goes on in the rest of v. 14 and v. 15 to warn against not trusting Him. If they Jews do not rely on His provision and protection and, instead, put their trust in human beings, then God will become “a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over.” He will be “a snare and a trap,” first for “the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” But this will also be the case for “both the houses of Israel,” meaning for both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. God even predicts in v. 15 that “many [of the nation of Israel] will stumble over them.” Here the “them” are the various items listed which can get in the way of the people and trip them—the “stone,” the “rock,” the “snare,” and the “trap.” Each one refers to some different and erroneous reason which the Jews, who lack authentic belief, think up to reject God. And whatever excuse they use, whether in Isaiah’s day when they are attracted to the false gods of their Ancient Near Eastern neighbors or in our day where they may be abject atheists, they will not only spiritually stumble over God, but they will fall when He destroys their kingdoms or executes His judgments on them in some other way. And, by implication, they will eventually incur eternal destruction. They will “fall and be broken,” first when Assyria attacks the northern Kingdom of Israel, then when they invade Judah and lay siege to Jerusalem, and finally at the final judgment.

Thus is God’s warning to Isaiah and primarily the inhabitants of Jerusalem, which the prophet follows up in vs. 16-22 with an exhortation to heed God’s warning,

8:16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law (תּוֹרָה) among my disciples.

8:17 And I will wait for Yahweh who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob;
I will even look eagerly for Him.

8:18 Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are for signs and wonders
in Israel from Yahweh of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

8:19 When they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,”
should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

- 8:20 To the law and to the testimony (לְתוֹרָה וְלְתַעֲוִיָּה)! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.
- 8:21 They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward.
- 8:22 Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness.

In this last paragraph of chapter 8, Isaiah first urges his “disciples,” those Jews who understand and believe what he is saying, to “bind up the testimony” of his “law,” literally *torah* (תּוֹרָה), i.e., instructions, about God. The prophet has just issued God’s warning to especially King Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem. Now, Isaiah urges his fellow believers to tie up or seal his recent instructions to all the inhabitants of the city so that they never think that God is not serious about His warnings and that they are vacuous. He also comments on the children whom God has given him. They are “signs and wonders” for the people of Israel in regard to the character and plans of their God. He is with them, protecting them from complete annihilation, and He dwells among them “on Mount Zion.” And God reiterates in v. 19 what Isaiah has said, that the people should look to His messages in the Old Testament and to His authorized spokesmen, the prophets, for their knowledge of Him and His purposes.

However, the Jews are consulting “mediums” and “spiritists.” If they continue in this vein, it is because “they have no dawn,” meaning that the light of truth is not within them. In other words, their hearts are not oriented towards God so as to embrace what He says. And what will be the outcome of their spiritual and intellectual rebellion? The Jews “will be driven away into [the] darkness,” meaning into foreign lands where the inhabitants worship false gods. And as the Jews experience physical hunger and deprivation at the hands of the Assyrians, “they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward.” This will obviously be instead of repenting before Him and acknowledging their sin. Because Isaiah 7:19-25 stated that the people of the Kingdom of Judah will be able to locate available food after the Assyrian invasion, God here at the end of chapter 8 is referring more to the northern tribes of Israel.

In contrast, Isaiah continues in 9:1-7 with words of encouragement to the Jews,

- 9:1 But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.
- 9:2 The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them.
- 9:3 You shall multiply the nation (הַרְבֵּיתָ מַגּוֹרֵי),
You shall increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Your presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
- 9:4 For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.
- 9:5 For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.
- 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace (שֵׁשׁ לְוֵם).
- 9:7 There will be no end (אֵין קֵץ) to the increase of His government or of peace (וְלִשְׁלוֹם),

On the throne of David and over his kingdom (עַל־כִּסֵּא דָוִד וְעַל־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ),
 To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness (לְהַכְיִן אֹתָהּ וְלִסְעָדָהּ בְּמִשְׁפָּט וּבְצִדְקָה)
 From then on and forevermore (מִנְעַתָּהּ וְעַד־עוֹלָם).
 The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will accomplish this (קִנְיַת יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה־זֹאת).

Certainly this next passage of 9:1-7 describes a time later in history when the Messiah first appears, approximately seven hundred years after the Assyrian invasion, and proclaims himself the king of the Jews and then reappears at a time still future to us when he will establish his kingdom over both the Jews on the land of Israel and the Gentiles in the rest of the world. In addition, the description in chapter 8 of the devastation of the land of Israel, the land which God has promised to Abraham and his descendants, sounded very similar to chapters 2 and 3 above. There I suggested that Isaiah is referring to events that have not yet occurred in our time—to God’s specific judgment and disciplinary actions towards the Jews, and then His fulfilling the promise of Genesis 12 to make Abraham’s descendants a “great nation.” Thus, the events of Isaiah 2 & 3 are different from those of chapter 8, but not so of chapter 9. Indeed, in Isaiah 8 & 9, the prophet first explains the situation in his own day and then refers to the future millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Thus, he jumps from the 8th century B.C. in chapter 8 to both a time seven hundred years after it and then at least twenty-seven hundred years later in chapter 9.

Does this seem reasonable that Isaiah would do so? Absolutely, especially when we realize that the Bible indicates that the focus of God’s eternal plans and purposes is to introduce the Messiah into human history at his first appearance and then bring him back into history permanently at his second appearance. Therefore, God through Isaiah (or any other prophet) may speak of past or future events that pertain to His judgment of either the Jews or the Gentiles and then immediately shift to other events which refer to His future mercy, i.e., to events directly involving both the Messiah’s appearances.

I suggest that God uses this pattern for two reasons. The first is that, regardless of when the Jews are experiencing God’s earthly judgment as His chosen people, He encourages them to remember His promises to them—to look forward to the future when they will become a “great nation.” The second reason for this pattern is that, the Messiah, with his death, resurrection, and return to establish his eternal kingdom, is what gives meaning to any human being’s life, whether we are talking about someone’s most mundane circumstances such as taking stroll in the sunshine or the most significant such as studying the Bible to learn about God. Jesus of Nazareth is the very center of God’s attention and purposes, so that his role and presence in human history is the reason why every other human being exists and performs his role in history according to God’s sovereign rule and authority.

Before we look carefully at Isaiah 9, here is a brief reminder of Isaiah 8. In vs. 1-4, God declares that before Isaiah’s next son knows how to call him “Father,” the “wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.” Therefore, within a few years, the Assyrian Empire will destroy the northern Kingdom of Israel and its neighbor, the Gentile Kingdom of Aram. And we know the actual year when this occurs to have been 722 B.C. and 732 B.C. respectively. In vs. 5-8, God adds that the Assyrians will invade Israel from the north and march as far south as Jerusalem in the Kingdom of Judah. And He addresses this specifically to someone named Immanuel, which means “God with us.” In this context, Immanuel must be the young man who was born of a young woman as stated in Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a young woman will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.” As above, I have changed the translation of the Hebrew word *‘almah* (עַלְמָה) from “virgin” to “young woman” because, as we saw, Isaiah 7:15-17 make it clear that God is referring to a female in the day of King Ahaz of Judah, to whom He is speaking. Indeed, she might even be Isaiah’s wife.

Moving on to Isaiah 8:9-10, Isaiah warns the Gentile nations (“O peoples”) that “God is with us.” This is to say that God is present among His chosen people, the Jews. Therefore, He is protecting

them, so that the other nations can “devise a plan” to destroy them completely, “but it will be thwarted.” Instead, they, the Gentiles, will “be shattered,” regardless of how militarily powerful they make themselves. They can even acquire nuclear weapons, but these are nothing in the face of the power and sovereign authority of God, the transcendent creator.

Them, in vs. 11-15, God warns both Isaiah and the nation of Israel to fear and trust Him rather than human beings who may be plotting to harm them. Thus, God is either a “holy place” for the Jews, someone whom they trust and who provides for them and protects them from their enemies, or He is someone whom they do not trust and over whom they trip and fall to their destruction. And, unfortunately, many of God’s chosen people will choose the second path and incur His condemnation. Implicit is that this will happen when Assyria destroys the Kingdom of Israel and Babylon does the same to the southern Kingdom of Judah.

Isaiah continues in vs. 16-22 by encouraging that all which He is stating as God’s message to the Jewish people be kept safe and preserved for his “disciples,” those who grasp the truth of what he is saying and who consider God’s words to be as valuable as he does. Isaiah also is willing to “wait for Yahweh,” for whatever unfolds in regard to the nation of Israel according to His sovereign control of human history. God additionally exhorts Isaiah to ignore the appeals of His people to “consult the mediums and spiritists.” Rather than their seeking to find out from those who have died what to do in their predicament of the approaching army of the Assyrians, God asks, “Should they not consult their God?” Of course they should. But people who rebel against God also refuse to listen to Him. They have ears for only other human beings, whether dead or alive, whom God has not authorized to speak on His behalf. They seek to gain wisdom, but they ignore God and His spokesmen in the Bible. Consequently, they obtain only foolishness and lies, not a proper understanding of reality. This is why Isaiah says emphatically in 8:20, “To the law [literally *torah* (תּוֹרָה)] and to the testimony,” which is to say, “Listen to only God’s teachings and instructions, the ideas and moral commandments which He provides to sinful human beings through the Jews and their prophets like me.”

Isaiah also states that at the end of the Assyrian invasion, the northern Kingdom of Israel “will be enraged and curse their king and their God.” They will “look to the earth [at the land of Israel], and all they will see is “distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish.” Plus, “they will be driven away [from the land] into [the] darkness” of the far reaches of the Assyrian Empire who will take them into exile. Such is what they have to look forward to because of their rebellion against Yahweh, their God.

Now we will consider chapter 9. Isaiah proceeds with the last ideas of 8:22 and yet says the opposite in 9:1, “But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.” Certainly, the prophet is jumping ahead to the end of the present age, because nothing like this has happened yet in the history of the Jews. God is going to make Galilee a “glorious” place, whereas “in earlier times He treated the land” of the northern tribes of Israel “with contempt.” The “earlier times” refer to what he has described in chapter 8, the Assyrian invasion and destruction they caused in around 700 B.C. The “glorious” times must refer to the millennial kingdom. Instead of the shame and dishonor of their past, the Jews will experience only glory and honor. And how will this happen?

Isaiah tells us in v. 2, “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.” For a long time, indeed for seven hundred years and then more afterwards, there will be a dearth of good teaching and truth among the Jewish people. It will be like walking around in a dark room, not knowing where to go morally and spiritually. But then, all of a sudden they “will see a great light.” They will hear someone who is proclaiming God’s truth with absolute clarity and accuracy. However, v. 1 mentions that this will happen “by way of the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.” It is here that “the light will shine on” the people of Israel. Therefore, I think that he is referring not only to the time when the Messiah will make everything “glorious” and strikingly great for the Jews at his return, but first to Jesus’ initial appearance when he proclaims the “light” of the truth that he is their Messiah. However, the Jews will reject him.

We learn from the gospel accounts in the New Testament that Jesus fits the description of the source of this “light.” He was born in Bethlehem and yet grew up in Galilee, in the city of Nazareth. He also spent time around the Sea of Galilee, including the Gentile area which is “on the other side [the east side] of the Jordan” River. This was to avoid contact with the Jewish leadership who wanted to arrest and eliminate him (cf. John 10:40). Nevertheless, he was a “great light” who proclaimed the truth of God to the Jews during his first appearance. And how much greater will this “great light” be when he returns, destroys Israel’s enemies, and established the eternal Kingdom of God, first on this earth and then on the new earth of Revelation 21-22.

Isaiah goes on in v. 3 to address God directly, “You shall multiply the nation, You shall increase their gladness; they will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.” God is going to expand the population of the Jews, and He will grow their joy and happiness far beyond the corresponding level of “gloom” and “anguish” they experienced during the Assyrian destruction of the 8th century B.C. Again, the events of v. 3 have not yet happened. Therefore, Isaiah must be speaking of God’s fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation.” This will obviously include His defeating Israel’s enemies, which, in vs. 4-5, Isaiah says God will bring about, “**4** For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. **5** For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, and cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.”

The people of Israel will be experiencing severe and oppressive subjugation by a foreign power, and they will come under attack by their enemies, probably with the purpose of annihilating the Jews, as has been the case at certain times in their history, such as the Holocaust of World War II. But God is going to intervene, and Jesus will appear with God’s “mighty messengers in flaming fire” (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7). Together, they will completely defeat the opposing army so that even their bloodied boots and uniforms will be burned to rid the land of their desecrating presence. Thus, God will put an end to any tyrannical power and authority which Israel’s enemies have exercised over them. By extrapolation and according to other prophetic passages, God with Jesus will subdue all other governments in the rest of the world and require they submit to them for the duration of the millennial kingdom.

Next, v. 6 obviously refers to Jesus’ first appearance, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” It is tempting to interpret this child, “a son [who] will be given” to the Jews, as the Son of God, the title of all the Davidic kings, starting with David himself (as we saw in Psalm 89 in Part 2). However, the word “son” is in parallel with “child.” Therefore, I think all Isaiah intends to point out with the word “son” is that this newborn will be male and not female. Nevertheless, Isaiah goes on to make it clear that the young boy will eventually be the final and permanent king of Israel. Therefore, he definitely will be the Son of God.

Isaiah first says that “the government will rest on his shoulders,” which can be the case for only a Davidic king. Plus, in the last part of v. 6, Isaiah assigns various titles to him. He says that “his name,” i.e., his role within God’s plans and purposes, will be “Wonderful Counselor,” meaning a teacher of truth and wisdom par excellence. Isaiah also calls him “Mighty God,” which we saw in Psalm 45 is a title which any of the Davidic kings could own, because each of them was God’s proxy and substitute on earth. To stand in the presence of Israel’s king is to be in the presence of the “Mighty God,” even if the king is David, or Solomon, or Hezekiah. However, Jesus will represent God in a manner far beyond David, Solomon, or any other kingly descendant in that he is the very icon and image of God in the creation (as Paul points out in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15). God is telling a magnificent story, and Jesus uniquely is God in the story. No other human being can claim such a role.

In addition, Isaiah refers to him as “Eternal Father,” again, as taught by Psalm 45, because the king is the Father’s proxy on earth. The throne room of the king of Israel is the throne room of God the Father. However, Jesus is the morally perfect representative and substitute of God. No other

descendant of David could claim this. Verse 6 goes on to say that Jesus will also be the “Prince of Peace.” He will be the chief ruler of *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם) in that he will bring about a long season of complete peace, prosperity, safety, and security for the Jewish people. No one will ever persecute or harm them again when Jesus rules over them during the millennial kingdom.

This passage ends in v. 7 with Isaiah’s making his final comments about this man and his ruling the Jews. “There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will accomplish this.” Thus the prophet mentions the duration of Jesus’ “kingdom” as he sits on “the throne of David.” It will last “from then on and forevermore” The Hebrew words for this last long phrase are *may’attah ve’ad ‘olam* (מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם), literally “from now and into perpetuity.” The Greek Septuagint reads *apo tou nun kai eis tov aiona kronon* (ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον), which translates literally “from the now and into the age/eternity time.” Isaiah is saying that the Messiah’s kingdom on the present earth will persist from the moment it comes into existence (at his return) and for as long as God decides this realm to exist.

Therefore, I interpret the first statement as referring to the physical size of Jesus’ kingdom. In other words, “There will be no end to the increase of his government or of peace” means that there will be no geographical boundary to Jesus’ kingdom. He will bring *shalom* to the whole earth. The Greek Septuagint says likewise, “And there is no limit to his *shalom* on the basis of the throne of David” (*kai tays eiraynays autou ouk estin horion epi ton thronon David*, καὶ τῆς εἰρήνης αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ὄριον ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον Δαυιδ). As we saw in Psalm 2:9, the final Messiah is going to crush the power of the Gentile nations and rule them with a rod of iron. Here in Isaiah 9:7, the prophet speaks of the same thing, that the Messiah will establish his kingdom over the entire world and uphold it with justice and righteousness.

Finally, the person ultimately responsible for all this is Yahweh. It will be His “zeal,” purpose, and enthusiasm which will “accomplish this,” because His primary goal in the present realm is to fulfill His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 and shape the Jewish people into the most powerful nation in history. Therefore, as usual, the glorious end that is spoken of for the nation of Israel assumes God’s earthly promise to Abraham. The Bible never transfers this promise to any other group in any other location, whether the Church of Christians on this earth who are followers of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, or the people who gain eternal life “in heaven.” Christians do not bring in or create the Kingdom of God on earth. And the Church of Christians are not the focus of the “great nation” on the promised “land” of Genesis 12:2. The Jews are.

After vs. 1-7, Isaiah changes his tone completely in 9:8-21,

- 9:8 The Lord sends a message against Jacob,
And it falls on Israel.
- 9:9 And all the people know it,
That is, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,
Asserting in pride and in arrogance of heart:
- 9:10 “The bricks have fallen down,
But we will rebuild with smooth stones;
The sycamores have been cut down,
But we will replace them with cedars.”
- 9:11 Therefore Yahweh raises against them adversaries from Rezin
And spurs their enemies on,
- 9:12 The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west;
And they devour Israel with gaping jaws.
In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away
And His hand is still stretched out.
- 9:13 Yet the people do not turn back to Him who struck them,
Nor do they seek Yahweh of hosts.

- 9:14 So Yahweh cuts off head and tail from Israel,
Both palm branch and bulrush in a single day (יום אֶתֶר).
- 9:15 The head is the elder and honorable man,
And the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.
- 9:16 For those who guide this people are leading them astray;
And those who are guided by them are brought to confusion.
- 9:17 Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men,
Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows;
For every one of them is godless and an evildoer,
And every mouth is speaking foolishness.
In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away
And His hand is still stretched out.
- 9:18 For wickedness burns like a fire;
It consumes briars and thorns;
It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame
And they roll upward in a column of smoke.
- 9:19 By the fury of Yahweh of hosts the land is burned up,
And the people are like fuel for the fire;
No man spares his brother.
- 9:20 They slice off what is on the right hand but still are hungry,
And they eat what is on the left hand but they are not satisfied;
Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm.
- 9:21 Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh,
And together they are against Judah.
In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away
And His hand is still stretched out.

Having seen Isaiah fast forward to Jesus' first and second appearances in vs. 1-7, we watch him now return to the 8th century B.C. where there is great trouble in the northern Kingdom of Israel, and God is sending them a message through the prophet (v. 8). They are proud and arrogant, and whatever loss they experience through the usual process and effects of life, their brick buildings deteriorating and falling down or their sycamore trees dying or being cut down, they claim that they will replace them with better buildings made of smooth stones and with better trees, cedars (like the famous ones of Lebanon) (vs. 9-10). In v. 11, it is probably better to translate the phrase "adversaries from Rezin" as "adversaries of Rezin." In other words, God is exercising His judgment on the Israelites by motivating the enemies of Aram and of their king, Rezin, to attack them and do great damage, along with the Philistines from the west (vs. 11-12). This is God's way of referring to the Assyrians. Just as Aram will see its destruction come at the hands of the Assyrian army, so will the Kingdom of Israel. Yet, in spite of God's harsh disciplinary actions, the Jews of the northern kingdom do not repent and do not call out to God for help and protection (v. 13). This is how stuck they are in their rebellion against Him. God is also removing their leaders and prophets, because they both are leading the people astray and only causing confusion in their minds (vs. 14-16). Consequently, truth about God is so scarce among the northern tribes that it is not to be found.

The entire population of the Kingdom of Israel is unwilling to follow God—young men, orphans, and widows included. They all are speaking foolishness, and God's anger persists against them (v. 17). This is how bad the situation is there. The people's wickedness will consume them in the form of God's anger and judgment, so that they are even fighting one another (vs. 18-19). All they are doing is harming themselves, with one tribe of Israel inflicting injury on another (v. 20). And in spite of God's chosen people contending for power and supremacy among themselves, when they should love their neighbor as themselves according to the Mosaic Covenant, God is not relenting in His plans to bring judgment on them (v. 21).

We continue with Isaiah 10:1-19,

- 10:1 Woe to those who enact evil statutes
And to those who constantly record unjust decisions,
- 10:2 So as to deprive the needy of justice
And rob the poor of My people of their rights,
So that widows may be their spoil
And that they may plunder the orphans.
- 10:3 Now what will you do in the day of punishment (לַיּוֹם פְּקוּדָה),
And in the devastation which will come from afar (מִמְּרָחֵק)?
To whom will you flee for help?
And where will you leave your wealth?
- 10:4 Nothing remains but to crouch among the captives
Or fall among the slain.
In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away
And His hand is still stretched out.
- 10:5 Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger
And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,
- 10:6 I send it against a godless nation
And commission it against the people of My fury
To capture booty and to seize plunder,
And to trample them down like mud in the streets.
- 10:7 Yet it does not so intend,
Nor does it plan so in its heart,
But rather it is its purpose to destroy
And to cut off many nations.
- 10:8 For it says, "Are not my princes all kings?"
- 10:9 "Is not Calno like Carchemish,
Or Hamath like Arpad,
Or Samaria like Damascus?"
- 10:10 "As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols,
Whose graven images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,
- 10:11 Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images
Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?"
- 10:12 So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem,
He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his
haughtiness."
- 10:13 For he has said,
"By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this,
For I have understanding;
And I removed the boundaries of the peoples (עַמִּים)
And plundered their treasures,
And like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants,
- 10:14 And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples (הָעַמִּים) like a nest,
And as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth;
And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened its beak or chirped."
- 10:15 Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it?
Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?
That would be like a club wielding those who lift it,
Or like a rod lifting him who is not wood.
- 10:16 Therefore the Lord, Yahweh of hosts, will send a wasting disease among his stout warriors;
And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame.
- 10:17 And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame,
And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day (בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד).
- 10:18 And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body,

And it will be as when a sick man wastes away.

10:19 And the rest of the trees of his forest will be so small in number
That a child could write them down.

Briefly, the above verses of Isaiah 10 indict mainly the Jews of the northern Kingdom of Israel for their disobedience of God's moral commandments in the Mosaic Covenant. But they also imply the sins of the southern Kingdom of Judah. And Isaiah predicts that the Assyrian Empire will invade and destroy the northern kingdom, while also threatening Judah and bringing a measure of destruction on them before God deals separately with the Assyrians and punishes them for their arrogance.

Here is a good place to quote 2 Kings 17:7-23, which provide in detail the reason for God's judgment on His people and why He expelled the northern kingdom from the land. The author first explains the sins of Israel and then includes Judah as participating in the same.

- 2 Kings 17:7 Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against Yahweh their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods
- 17:8 and walked in the customs of the nations whom Yahweh had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced.
- 17:9 The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against Yahweh their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city.
- 17:10 They set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree,
- 17:11 and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which Yahweh had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking Yahweh.
- 17:12 They served idols, concerning which Yahweh had said to them, "You shall not do this thing."
- 17:13 Yet Yahweh warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets."
- 17:14 However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in Yahweh their God.
- 17:15 They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which Yahweh had commanded them not to do like them.
- 17:16 They forsook all the commandments of Yahweh their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.
- 17:17 Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of Yahweh, provoking Him.
- 17:18 So Yahweh was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.
- 17:19 Also Judah did not keep the commandments of Yahweh their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced.
- 17:20 Yahweh rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight.
- 17:21 When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following Yahweh and made them commit a great sin.
- 17:22 The sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them
- 17:23 until Yahweh removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.

The bottom line is that 1) the Israelites have ignored and rejected the Mosaic Covenant which God made with their forefathers eight hundred years earlier when He rescued them from slavery in

Egypt and commanded that all future generations of Jews obey the covenant; 2) the Israelites have worshiped the pagan gods of the Gentile peoples who formerly occupied the land of Israel; and 3) the Israelites have refused to listen to God's prophets who have been warning them for years to repent and turn back to God. For these reasons, God is destroying their kingdoms and driving them off the land which He promised them.

In order to understand correctly the next paragraph, Isaiah 10:20-23, we should examine carefully these first nineteen verses of chapter 10. In vs. 1-4, God speaks very negatively to a group of people,

- 10:1 Woe to those who enact evil statutes
And to those who constantly record unjust decisions,
10:2 So as to deprive the needy of justice
And rob the poor of My people of their rights,
So that widows may be their spoil
And that they may plunder the orphans.
10:3 Now what will you do in the day of punishment,
And in the devastation which will come from afar?
To whom will you flee for help?
And where will you leave your wealth?
10:4 Nothing remains but to crouch among the captives
Or fall among the slain.
In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away
And His hand is still stretched out.

In the light of God's negative assessment in chapter 9 of the northern Kingdom of Israel, it makes sense that He is still speaking to them here in chapter 10. He is pronouncing both judgment and condemnation on them, because they "enact evil statutes" and "constantly record unjust decisions" (v. 1). Their law courts are corrupt, so that they "deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of [God's] people of their rights." Indeed, widows and orphans have become the "spoil" and "plunder" of the wealthy (v. 2). Therefore, God asks the Jews what they will do "in the day of punishment" with their "wealth," when the Assyrians attack their land and homes? Where are they going to get "help" to protect them from these fierce and merciless enemies? The implied answer is, "Nowhere" (v. 3). As a result, "nothing remains" for the northern Kingdom of Israel but to "crouch among the captives or fall among the slain" at the hands of the Assyrians. And, "in spite of all this, [God's] anger does not turn away and His hand" is still administering justice towards His people by using the Assyrian kings and army to fulfill His disciplinary purposes (v. 4).

But, in vs. 5-11, God also expresses His anger towards Assyria,

- 10:5 Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger
And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,
10:6 I send it against a godless nation
And commission it against the people of My fury
To capture booty and to seize plunder,
And to trample them down like mud in the streets.
10:7 Yet it does not so intend,
Nor does it plan so in its heart,
But rather it is its purpose to destroy
And to cut off many nations.
10:8 For it says, "Are not my princes all kings?
10:9 "Is not Calno like Carchemish,
Or Hamath like Arpad,
Or Samaria like Damascus?
10:10 "As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols,
Whose graven images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,
10:11 Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images

Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?"

The king and army of the Assyrian Empire have drawn a great big bullseye on themselves, and God has it in His sights. "Woe" to them, He says in v. 5, in spite of the fact that they are "the rod of [His] anger" and "the staff" of "His indignation," which He is using as an instrument of judgment on the Kingdom of Israel. To be explicit, God says that He is sending them "against a godless nation," the Jews, which means both Israel and Judah, the northern and southern kingdoms respectively, because eventually the Assyrians will invade both. And their purpose will be "to capture booty and seize plunder, and to trample down [the people] like mud in the streets" (v. 6). The devastation coming from the army will be extensive. And while God's intent is simply to use the Assyrians to discipline His chosen people, this foreign army's intent is "to destroy...many nations" (v. 7). God's motivation is pure and moral. The Assyrians' motivation is impure and arrogant. They are saying, "Are not my princes all kings," in the sense that those in Assyria who have less power than the king have greater power than the kings of the surrounding peoples (v. 8). They are also saying, "Is not Calno [a city in Aram] like Carchemish [a Hittite city which will be acquired], or Hamath [also a city in Aram] like Arpad [a city already within the empire], or Samaria [the capital of the northern Kingdom of Israel] like Damascus [the capital of Aram which will be captured]" (v. 9). In their arrogance, the Assyrians expect to conquer Calno, Hamath, and Samaria as easily as they have or will be taking Carchemish, Arpad, and Damascus. They also expect to destroy the southern Kingdom of Judah and capture Jerusalem (v. 10).

God then goes on in vs. 12-14 to state that He will punish Assyria and the reason why,

10:12 So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness."

10:13 For he has said,
 "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this,
 For I have understanding;
 And I removed the boundaries of the peoples
 And plundered their treasures,
 And like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants,

10:14 And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest,
 And as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth;
 And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened its beak or chirped."

God's plan is for the Assyrians is to invade as far south as Jerusalem, which contains His dwelling place and is called Mt. Zion. It will be there that He finishes His disciplinary actions towards both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah—for the time being, because the Babylonians will come a hundred years later and finish the job at Jerusalem. Thus, Isaiah is warning this city and Judah that the same fate of complete destruction awaits them if they continue rebelling against God. In addition, after He has used the Assyrian Empire as His instrument of judgment, God will destroy it for two reasons. The first is that they have been arrogant and believed that they are the most powerful force in the cosmos. The second is that they have planned and committed great harm towards His people, the Jews.

It is true that the both Israel and Judah deserve God's judgment. It is also the case that God intends to use the Assyrians to punish them. However, God still holds these Gentiles accountable for their sins—for their pride, their cruelty, and any harm they bring to the Jews, who are His possession and His chosen people. Therefore, we conclude that just because the Jews have rebelled against God and deserve His justice does not mean that Gentiles have the right to punish them. God will not let any Gentile or Gentiles get away with attacking and causing suffering to the nation of Israel. They will pay for their presumption of thinking that the Jews are a legitimate target for their hatred and persecution.

God goes on in vs. 15-19 to rebuke the Assyrians and describe their army's demise,

- 10:15 Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it?
Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?
That would be like a club wielding those who lift it,
Or like a rod lifting him who is not wood.
- 10:16 Therefore the Lord, Yahweh of hosts, will send a wasting disease among his stout warriors;
And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame.
- 10:17 And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame,
And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day.
- 10:18 And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body,
And it will be as when a sick man wastes away.
- 10:19 And the rest of the trees of his forest will be so small in number
That a child could write them down.

God asks in v. 15 if a tool should ever brag about what it is doing in the hands of the one who is wielding it. Is it ever legitimate for an “axe” or a “saw” to think that it is greater than the person who is using it? If ever the “axe” or “saw” did make such a claim, it would be “like a rod lifting him who is not wood.” Obviously, God is asking a rhetorical question. Of course it is absurd that a human being be considered less powerful and less in control than the tool he is using. Likewise, it is absurd that the Assyrians (and all other human beings) think in their hearts and minds that they are greater than God in any manner. Plus, the result of such arrogance by the characters in God's story is that He will hold them accountable for their arrogance and pride and execute His judgment on them. According to Isaiah, God is manifesting His anger and justice towards the Israelites for rebelling against Him. And He is manifesting His anger and justice towards the Assyrians. He is holding both groups of people accountable for their pride and immorality.

Verse 16 says that “a fire will be kindled like a burning flame under [Assyria's] glory.” And the next verse continues, “And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day.” While the Hebrew text has *beyom 'ehad* (בְּיוֹם אֶחָד), which means “in one day,” the Septuagint has *tay haymera ekeinay* (τῆ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη), i.e., “in that day.” If the Hebrew text is correct, the word “single” or “one” is not hyperbole and, as the Septuagint probably means, refers to the speed with which God, who is even Assyria's “Holy One” and creator (in spite of their ignoring God and worshiping pagan gods), will bring an end to the Assyrian army and their ability to create devastation in Judah, i.e., their “thorns” and “briars.” Here is the description in 2 Kings 19:35-37 of God's actions in 701 B.C. and of the death of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib,

- 2 Kings 19:35 Then it happened that night that the angel of Yahweh went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when [the rest of the] men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead.
- 19:36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home, and lived at Nineveh.
- 19:37 It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer [his sons!] killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his [other] son became king in his place.

Thus, we see that God accomplishes His will towards the Assyrian army, to “destroy the glory of [Sennacherib's] forest,” who are “his stout warriors,” with the result that “the rest of” his army “will be so small in number that a child could” count them and write down their number (vs. 18-19).

Then, Isaiah speaks more of the Jews' future in 10:20-23,

- 10:20 Now in that day (וּבַיּוֹם הַהוּא) the remnant of Israel (שְׁאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל),
and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never

again rely on the one who struck them,
but will truly rely on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

10:21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob (שְׂאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל יָשׁוּב יְהוָה), to the mighty God.

10:22 For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea,

Only a remnant within them will return (שְׂאֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל יָשׁוּב יְהוָה);

A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.

10:23 For a complete destruction, one that is decreed,

Adonai Yahweh of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land (בְּקִרְבּוֹ כָּל-הָאָרֶץ).

I have wrestled with how to interpret these verses. There are at least three options — 1) Isaiah is predicting that there will be a few Jews who will authentically turn to God in their hearts and minds as a result of the Assyrian invasions of Israel and Judah in the late 8th century and early 7th century B.C.; 2) Isaiah is predicting that there will be a few Jews who will return to the land of Israel from Babylon after the Assyrian and Babylonian destructions of Israel and Judah in the late 8th century and early 6th century B.C., and these Jews will all authentically turn to God in their hearts and minds; 3) Isaiah is predicting that there will be a few Jews who will return to the land of Israel from wherever they might be in the world after the destruction of the land and Jerusalem by the armies of the Man of Lawlessness, a.k.a. the Beast of Revelation, at the time of Jesus' return, and these Jews will all authentically turn to God in their hearts and minds.

I have concluded the first option is correct because the immediate context in the rest of chapter 10 best supports this option. In vs. 1-19, we saw that God is using the Assyrian Empire to discipline His chosen people in the late 8th century B.C. and that this foreign nation will wreak havoc on the land of Israel all the way to, but not including, the city of Jerusalem, where God will bring an end to the army and their efforts. In vs. 24-34, God will focus his words on the destruction of the Assyrian army so that the Jews in Jerusalem need not fear it. While it is tempting to interpret the above passage of vs. 20-23 as referring to the return of Jesus as the Messiah and to the gathering of the Jews into the land of Israel for the millennial kingdom (option #3), I think that it makes more sense to interpret them with option #1, that Isaiah is predicting that there will be a few Jews who will authentically turn to God in their hearts and minds as a result of the Assyrian invasions of Israel and Judah in the late 8th century and early 7th century B.C. And the best reason for option #1 is that the verses of chapter 10 both before and after the above passage of vs. 20-23 refer to Assyria, the Jews, and even Jerusalem in the 8th century B.C. Certainly, it is always possible in the prophetic books that a single paragraph such as vs. 20-23 can stand alone apart from the context. However, I still think that it is better to interpret these verses with the first option and understand their relevance for the rest of Jewish history.

Let us take each verse at a time. In v. 20, Isaiah says,

10:20 Now in that day the remnant of Israel,

and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never
again rely on the one who struck them,
but will truly rely on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

We notice right away the adverb and prepositional phrase “Now in that day.” When we looked at Isaiah 2:5-4:6, several times we encountered the same phrase “in that day,” *bayyom hahu* (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא). There I suggested that, because of the clear reference in the context to the prosperous and “great nation” which God has promised to Abraham’s descendants, the prophet was referring to the distant future and events which the world has not yet experienced. In other words, he was referring to the same time period as option #3 for vs. 20-23. Here, though, following on the heels of vs. 1-19 and preceding vs. 24-34, he is referring to his contemporary situation. In addition, Isaiah used this same phrase, “in that day,” to refer to the circumstances surrounding Ahaz, Rezin, Pekah and the Assyrians in 7:18, 20, 21, & 23. While it is plausible that the prophet is providing a parenthetical statement here

in vs. 20-23, I think it makes more sense that he is staying within the contemporary time period of the context of the entirety of chapter 10.

We also notice that Isaiah speaks of “the remnant of Israel and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped.” The word “remnant” (שְׂאֵר, *she'ar* in Hebrew; τὸ κατάλειμμα, *to kataleimma* in Greek) is sometimes used in the prophets to refer to the relatively small group of Jews whom God will gather back into the land when He fulfills His promise to make them a “great nation.” For example, there is Jeremiah 23:3,

Jer. 23:3 “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.”

But since the context points more to his day, Isaiah is implying that there will be a group of Jews who avoid death at the hands of the Assyrians, in both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah. And what will characterize this small group of these Jews, a “remnant,” is that “they will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.” The “one who struck” these Jews is the Assyrian king and his army. It was especially true of Ahaz and Judah that they appealed to the Assyrians for help against Rezin and Pekah. But rather than depend upon him (or any other foreign power), this “remnant” of Jews will trust God for their protection, safety, and security. And why will they do this? Verse 21 tells us,

10:21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.

This small group of Jews will find themselves returning to God, which means, I think, that God will ensure that they are inwardly different from either their previous spiritual condition or their fellow unbelieving Jews, or both. God will change their hearts, so that they are now willing to trust only Him and not human beings for what they need in life. To put it another way, the “remnant” will be Jews who become authentic believers in Yahweh at the time of the Assyrian invasion of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and of the southern kingdom up to the time of 701 B.C., and probably a little beyond. Instead of the rebels the Jews of both kingdoms had once been before He disciplined them with the Assyrians, some of them will become people with changed hearts and a genuine desire to obey God.

We also notice that Isaiah does not say that these Jews will return to the land of Israel. He only says that they will return to “the mighty God.” I realize that I am suggesting an argument from silence, but it is possible that Isaiah is leaving out the land in his statements because either these Jews never left it or their returning to God in their hearts is what matters for the time being. In other words, these are people who either were and still are living mainly in Jerusalem and perhaps in the surrounding area of Judah, or they are Jews of the Assyrian exile whose hearts God will change, regardless of their never returning to the land of Israel.

Next, we consider the first part of v. 22,

10:22a For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea,
Only a remnant within them will return;

Again, thinking that the “remnant” are Isaiah’s contemporaries, being “like the sand of the sea” refers to the larger group of Jews who were living in the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah just before Assyria began their incursions and acts of destruction and exile. Taking into account our interpretation of v. 21, Isaiah is saying that the larger group were hardhearted, stubborn, and rebellious towards God. They were still “Israel,” but only in name. They were descendants of Abraham through Jacob, his grandson, but they were uncircumcised of heart (to use terminology from Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6). However, in the midst of and/or after the suffering and pain which the Assyrians will bring on the Jews, God will cause a relatively small number of

them to “return” to Him by circumcising their hearts. He will change them inwardly, and at least they will never again be unwilling to believe, trust, and obey Him.

This most likely means that there will still be unbelieving Jews who are living among these believing Jews. In other words, the point that God is making is that there will be authentic believers like Isaiah who will continue to be a vital part of the nation of Israel, and, by extrapolation, this will always be the case throughout the rest of their history—right up to the time when Jesus returns and all the Jews of the ensuing millennial kingdom will have circumcised hearts and will believe and trust God from generation to generation. Such is God’s *hesed* and constant faithfulness to Abraham’s physical descendants through Jacob.

The apostle Paul uses this principle in his argument in Romans 9 to the effect that God is remaining faithful to the Jews in his day to make them a united and powerful people eventually in spite of three issues which Paul’s detractors raise against his gospel. One is that Paul’s gospel seems to eliminate any importance which the Mosaic Covenant has had for the Jews. The second is that it surely appears as though God has abandoned the Jews and turned His attention solely to the Gentiles. The third is that down through the years, so few Jews have become genuinely obedient to God in contrast to the majority who have rebelled against Him that it would do as though God has abandoned the Jews. Part of Paul’s response to these objections is to quote Isaiah 10:22-23 from the Greek Septuagint with slight modifications,

Romans 9:27 Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant who will be saved;
9:28 for the Lord will execute His word on the land, finishing it and making it short in righteousness.”

Paul has been arguing and is continuing here in these two verses that God’s sovereign purposes have included there being a large number of descendants of Abraham through Jacob, i.e., “sons of Israel,” throughout their history. However, He never intended that each Jew be a person of changed heart and authentic belief. Instead, the nation of Israel’s experience has been that most of them have disobeyed and rebelled against God, while a small number, a “remnant,” have humbly submitted to Him properly. Paul’s point in Romans 9-11 is that eventually this “remnant” will become the only kind of Jew existing on the earth, as he says in 11:26-27,

Romans 11:26 And thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,
 “The deliverer will come from Zion.
 He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.
11:27 “This is My covenant with them,
 When I take away their sins.”

And we know from the Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah that all these Jews will be gathered back into the land of Israel when God makes them the final “remnant” at Jesus’ return. Consequently, the small group of genuine Jewish believers in Isaiah’s day sets a precedent for the rest of their history. There has been, continues to be, and will always be a “remnant” of authentic believers among the Jews. Nevertheless, according to the rest of Isaiah 10:22 and also v. 23, this particular “remnant” of Jews in Isaiah’s day will have to endure great tribulation at the hands of the Assyrians in the process of their becoming believers,

10:22b A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.
10:23 For a complete destruction, one that is decreed,
 Adonai Yahweh of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.

While providing the encouraging words of God’s faithfulness to preserve a “remnant” of believers during the hardships which Assyria will bring upon the Jews of both the northern Kingdom

of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah, Isaiah once again mentions the effects that this Gentile empire will have. God has “determined” that He execute His judgment and disciplinary actions on the Jews. As a result, it will be “overflowing with righteousness” in the sense that God will do what is good and right because of His perfect moral character and righteous intents. Nevertheless, there will be little, if any, mercy that the Jews will experience, except of course for the people of Jerusalem whom God spares. By using the Assyrians as His instrument of justice, God will bring about “a complete destruction” of the northern Kingdom of Israel and of many walled cities and villages of Judah. Thus, God will “execute” His judgments “in the midst of the whole land.” Northern Israel will disappear, but, likewise, southern Judah will experience a tremendous amount of devastation, making it almost disappear.

To summarize vs. 20-23, in spite of and in the midst of great destruction which God will cause through the Assyrian king and army on His chosen people near the end of the 8th century B.C., He will preserve a relatively small group of Jews whose hearts and minds He will change, so that they become genuine followers of Yahweh. Never again will this group fundamentally trust in anyone other than God Himself for their safety, security, and provision in life. They, of course, will still be sinners, so that there will be moments in their lives when they either are tempted to trust in man or will actually do so, but their overall spiritual condition will be one of trust in God alone. Indeed, they will be just like other Jews before them, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David. And they will be just like other Jews after them, such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, the apostle Peter, and the apostle Paul. And God’s point of saying this and doing this is to affirm His commitment to the Jews by keeping a fragment of believing Jews in existence during the whole time that the nation of Israel exists, culminating in the “great nation” of the millennial kingdom.

Then, in the last part of chapter 10, vs. 24-34, God encourages specifically the people of the Kingdom of Judah,

10:24 Therefore thus says Adonai Yahweh of hosts, “O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt did.

10:25 “For in a very little while My indignation against you will be spent and My anger will be directed to their destruction.”

10:26 Yahweh of hosts will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff will be over the sea and He will lift it up the way He did in Egypt.

10:27 So it will be in that day, that his burden will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be broken because of fatness.

10:28 He has come against Aiath,
He has passed through Migron;
At Michmash he deposited his baggage.

10:29 They have gone through the pass, saying,
“Geba will be our lodging place.”
Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away.

10:30 Cry aloud with your voice, O daughter of Gallim!
Pay attention, Laishah and wretched Anathoth!

10:31 Madmenah has fled.
The inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge.

10:32 Yet today he will halt at Nob;
He shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

10:33 Behold, the Lord, Yahweh of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash;
Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down
And those who are lofty will be abased.

10:34 He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron axe,
And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

God is clearly angry with Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem, because they are not obeying Him and the Mosaic Covenant properly. And He is bringing the Assyrians against them to discipline them.

However, His anger towards the Jews will soon subside, and He will turn it on the Assyrians to destroy their army, at least enough of it that it makes no sense for them to continue their campaign against Jerusalem, and it will be spared (vs. 24-25). When God directs His anger towards the Assyrian army, He “will arouse a scourge against [them]” as He did towards previous enemies of the Israelites, for example, Midian and Egypt (v. 26). During the time of Gideon, approximately seven hundred years earlier, 120,000 Midianites died when God caused so much confusion among their army that they killed one another. And Pharaoh’s army, eight hundred years earlier, died in the Red Sea when the waters returned after the Israelites had passed through on the dry seabed. God is going to execute the same kind of judgment on the Assyrians for their arrogance and the suffering they have caused the nation of Israel. I quoted above the relevant passage from 2 Kings 19:35-37,

2 Kings 19:35 Then it happened that night that the angel of Yahweh went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when [the rest of the] men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead.

19:36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home, and lived at Nineveh.

19:37 It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer [his sons!] killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his [other] son became king in his place.

In this way, God will remove the Assyrian “yoke” from the neck of the people of Jerusalem, even though their army overran the cities of Aiath, Migron, Michmash, Geba, Ramah, Gibeah, and others in Judah. But God halts the army at Nob, within six miles north of Jerusalem (vs. 27-32). Fortunately, they only “shake their fist” at the capital city, because God “lops off the boughs with a terrible crash,” meaning that, overnight, He kills the strongest warriors of the army, those “tall in stature” and “lofty,” as the above verses from 2 Kings 19:35-37 attest. Thus, “Lebanon” (a reference to the great forests which grow in it, as likened to the great army of Assyria) “will fall by the Mighty One.” The powerful soldiers of Assyria are nothing in comparison to the unfathomably powerful and transcendent creator, the God of the Jews, who always remains faithful to them to preserve their existence in the world. God’s “iron axe” is sharper and bigger than their organic bodies and man-made weapons. God will eventually conquer all Israel’s enemies, and no one who comes against them will be spared, especially in the last battle of Armageddon when their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, returns and establishes the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

And, in conclusion, there are the two chapters of Isaiah 11-12 of this unit,

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

11:2 The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.

11:3 And He will delight in the fear of Yahweh,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

11:4 But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

11:5 Also righteousness (צֶדֶק) will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness (וְדִבְרֵי אֱמֻנָה) the belt about His waist.

11: 6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little boy will lead them.

- 11:7 Also the cow and the bear will graze,
 Their young will lie down together,
 And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
- 11:8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
 And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.
- 11:9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
 For the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh (כִּי־מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ דַּעַת אֶת־יְהוָה)
 As the waters cover the sea.
- 11:10 Then in that day (וַהֲיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא)
 The nations will resort to the root of Jesse,
 Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;
 And His resting place will be glorious.
- 11:11 Then it will happen on that day (וַהֲיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) that the Lord
 Will again recover the second time with His hand
 The remnant of His people, who will remain (אֶת־שְׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאֵר),
 From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath,
 And from the islands of the sea.
- 11:12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations
 And assemble the banished ones of Israel (וַאֲסַף נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל),
 And will gather the dispersed of Judah (וַיִּגְבְּצוֹת יְהוּדָה יַקְבִּיץ)
 From the four corners of the earth (מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְּפוֹת הָאָרֶץ).
- 11:13 Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart,
 And those who harass Judah will be cut off;
 Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,
 And Judah will not harass Ephraim.
- 11:14 They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west;
 Together they will plunder the sons of the east;
 They will possess Edom and Moab,
 And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.
- 11:15 And Yahweh will utterly destroy (וַהֲחָרִים)
 The tongue of the Sea of Egypt;
 And He will wave His hand over the River
 With His scorching wind;
 And He will strike it into seven streams
 And make men walk over dry-shod.
- 11:16 And there will be a highway from Assyria
 For the remnant of His people who will be left (לְשְׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאֵר),
 Just as there was for Israel
 In the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.
- 12:1 Then you will say on that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא),
 "I will give thanks to You, Yahweh;
 For although You were angry with me,
 Your anger is turned away,
 And You comfort me.
- 12:2 "Behold, God is my salvation (הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵי יְשׁוּעָתִי),
 I will trust (אֶבְטַח) and not be afraid;
 For Yah Yahweh is my strength and song,
 And He has become my salvation (וַיְהִי־לִי לְיְשׁוּעָה)."
- 12:3 Therefore you will joyously draw water
 From the springs of salvation.
- 12:4 And in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) you will say,
 "Give thanks to Yahweh, call on His name.
 Make known His deeds among the peoples;

Make them remember that His name is exalted.”

12:5 Praise Yahweh in song, for He has done excellent things;
Let this be known throughout the earth (יְהַלְלוּ-בְשִׁירָה אֶת-יְהוָה).

12:6 Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

After speaking in chapter 10 of the Assyrian invasion and preservation of a believing remnant of God’s chosen people, the Israelites, Isaiah goes on in chapters 11 & 12 to predict the coming of the Messiah. Different from Isaiah 4:2 where “branch” referred to the agricultural produce from the ground, here in 11:1 Isaiah is definitely speaking metaphorically of the Messiah, as other passages of the prophets will do when using the same word. The prophet says, “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.” By using the agricultural analogy of a “shoot...from the stem of Jesse” and a “branch from his roots will bear fruit,” the prophet is declaring that David’s father, Jesse, and therefore obviously David himself will have a descendant who will appear on the scene in Israel. We can tell by the description of this man in the rest of the passage that he is the Messiah, the final king of Israel, who comes to establish his kingdom of *shalom*, safety, and ascendancy over the Gentiles for the Jewish people. In other words, this man is Jesus of Nazareth of the New Testament.

In v. 2, Isaiah goes on to say, “2 The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh.” This descendant of Jesse and David will be great because God’s Holy Spirit will guide and direct him in all his decision making. The Spirit will give him “wisdom and understanding” of God and how to fulfill the role which He has given him. As a result, he will act according to good “counsel” and adequate “strength” as the Messiah. He will also acquire as much “knowledge” of God and His plans and purposes as possible, and he will “fear,” i.e., respect, and worship Yahweh as any human being should. Thus, Jesus’ entire existence will culminate in his being the ruler of the never-ending Kingdom of God.

Isaiah continues describing the Messiah in vs. 3-4, “3 And he will delight in the fear of Yahweh, and he will not judge by what his eyes see, nor make a decision by what his ears hear; 4 but with righteousness he will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.” Jesus will be so enamored of God the Father that he will never choose to do something independently of Him. As a result, whenever he helps the “poor” and “afflicted” who have suffered on the “earth” (or on the “land,” if only the Jews and Israel are in view here), he will do so with righteousness” (*tzedek* (צְדָקָה) in Hebrew) and “fairness” (*meeshor* (מִישׁוֹר) in Hebrew). In other words, he will always decide between the oppressed and their oppressors with perfect justice, especially by punishing anyone who oppresses his fellow human beings, providing a strong incentive for the whole world to submit to the “rod of iron” with which he will rule (cf. Psalm 2:9). All his judgments will be correct and right. And if anyone opposes him, Jesus will execute these “wicked” ones, because he will not stand for any rebellion against God and him.

Certainly, Isaiah is speaking of Jesus’ return and his ruling over both the Jews and the entire Gentile world. Therefore, “earth” probably is better understood as the whole globe. And this is why “righteousness will be the belt about his loins, and faithfulness the belt about his waist” (v. 5). When the Messiah exercises his authority over the world, he will consistently act with *tzedek* (righteousness) and *’emunah* (faithfulness) just as God does. It will be as though he wears these perfect moral characteristics like a garment and a belt respectively. Therefore, he is always clothed in what is right and what is best for the Jews and, by extrapolation, for the Gentiles, in accordance with God’s promises and His own moral perfection.

Then, Isaiah goes on in vs. 6-9 to predict that, because of David’s descendant’s righteous rule,

11:6 The wolf will dwell with the lamb,

And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
 And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
 And a little boy will lead them.

11:7 Also the cow and the bear will graze,
 Their young will lie down together,
 And the lion will eat straw like the ox.

11:8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
 And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.

11:9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
 For the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh
 As the waters cover the sea.

These verses describe a scene of almost perfect *shalom*. I say, "almost," because this new order of nature, which comes from the Messiah's presence and ruling with God's authority on the present earth, will still contain sinful people. Nevertheless, mortal enemies in the animal world will become friends, and mortal threats to human beings among the animals and other living creatures will disappear, so that all living creatures will dwell together on the earth without harming one another. And while sin will still exist in the midst of this *shalom*, it will not in the new and eternal realm of the new cosmos as described in Revelation 21 and 22.

In other words, the millennial kingdom will be only the first stage of the eternal Kingdom of God, and it will definitely be a radically different world from the one we are experiencing now and that human beings have experienced since Cain killed his brother Abel in Genesis 4. But then, according to Revelation 21, God will destroy the present realm and an even more radically different world will come into existence where sin will never again exist. In spite of the tremendous difference between the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, where there will still be sin, and the "new earth" of Revelation 21, where no sin will ever rear its ugly head, the millennial kingdom will nevertheless be enjoyable almost beyond words for former believers and believing Jews and Gentiles living on the earth. This is the environment of *shalom* which Isaiah is describing in 11:6-9.

Isaiah also says that the *shalom* of the coming world will encompass Jerusalem, God's "holy mountain." No one will harm, oppress, or persecute the Jews as in days past, "for the earth will be full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea." In spite of there being unbelievers, who fundamentally continue to rebel against God while inhabiting the Gentile nations of the world, Jesus' strong authority and rule over them will provide them with adequate understanding so that they know not to challenge him and risk being slain by his power. However, Revelation 20:7-10 does inform us that at the end of the millennial kingdom, Satan will influence the unbelieving Gentiles to rise up and attempt one more time to destroy Jesus and the Jews. But they will fail completely, and God will destroy them instead.

Isaiah states in v. 10 this idea of all the Gentiles' submitting to the Messiah's rule, "Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious." We have here another use of the phrase "in that day," and the context clearly points to its referring to the Kingdom of God which the Messiah will bring about on the land of Israel when he returns. In addition, the word "nations" could refer to both Gentiles and Jews, or to only the Gentiles. It is probably the latter, and the prophet is saying that the people of the world outside the land of Israel (because we know that all the Jews will be authentic believers on the land as members of the "great nation" of Genesis 12:2) will turn their attention to Jesus, Jesse's descendant, who will provide them with the proper information about how to respond to God and to him. And they will respond well, in spite of many unbelievers still living in the world, because all the Gentiles will submit (grudgingly, if necessary) to Jesus' authority. In addition, the place where Jesus will dwell, Jerusalem, will finally and permanently (!) be quiet and peaceful, free from unrest and conflict, because he will wield unassailable (and righteous and morally perfect) power and authority over the whole world. This will be the glory of the *shalom* and enjoyable existence which God has promised

primarily to the Jews and also to the other parts of the world through the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

In v. 11, Isaiah continues, “11 Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations and assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” The first time when God brings a “remnant of His people” back into the land of Israel could refer either 1) to Exodus-Joshua and God’s rescuing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt around 1500 B.C., or 2) to a small group of Jews returning from the Babylonian exile five and a half centuries before Jesus’ first appearance. Because Isaiah uses the word “remnant,” which seems to mean a small group who have escaped destruction when a larger group has not, and the Exodus involved the entirety of the existing nation of Israel in Egypt, I am inclined to think that he is referring to option #2.

Therefore, “on that day” (literally, “in that day,” the same phrase we have seen before), which is to say when Jesus returns to the land of Israel to restore the Kingdom of Israel, God will bring “the remnant of His people” back into the land of Israel after most of the Jews will have died during The Great and Terrible Day of Yahweh (cf. Malachi 4:5,6; Revelation 18-19). As first stated in Deuteronomy 30:3-4, which we looked at in Part 1, God is going to “gather” His chosen people “from all the peoples” where He has “scattered” them. Isaiah says that this gathering will be “from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros [near Egypt], Cush [Sudan/Ethiopia], Elam [northern Iran], Shinar [Babylon/Iraq], Hamath [Syria], and from the islands of the sea,” which are countries and nations in or near the Middle East.

God also will “lift up a standard for the nations,” which is in parallel in v. 12 with the fact that He “will assemble the banished ones of Israel, and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” The word “standard” (נֵשֶׂא (*nays*) in Hebrew, σημεῖον (*saymayon*) in the Greek Septuagint) means “banner” or “sign.” As the Jews return to the land which He promised them, it will be as though God is holding up a great big huge banner that says, “Look over here! See! I really am the one, true God of the universe, and the Jews really are My chosen people! And I am the God who fulfills His promises, including the one to Abraham to make his descendants the most powerful nation in history and to give them this land. Therefore, I am bringing these Jews back to Israel from the far reaches of the world! So do not ever think that I have ever neglected or abandoned My plans and purposes which I devised before I brought the creation into existence! I have always been working to bring about the Kingdom of God with the Jewish people on their land during the present realm. And here is proof!”

This major change externally for the Jews will include an internal one, too. They will have an altogether new attitude towards one another and a new ability to fight their enemies as Isaiah describes in vs. 13-16,

- 11:13 Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart,
 And those who harass Judah will be cut off;
 Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,
 And Judah will not harass Ephraim.
- 11:14 They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west;
 Together they will plunder the sons of the east;
 They will possess Edom and Moab,
 And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.
- 11:15 And Yahweh will utterly destroy
 The tongue of the Sea of Egypt;
 And He will wave His hand over the River
 With His scorching wind;
 And He will strike it into seven streams
 And make men walk over dry-shod.

11:16 And there will be a highway from Assyria
 For the remnant of His people who will be left,
 Just as there was for Israel
 In the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.

As a good friend of mine says, “There is a lot of envy in this world.” And it has existed among and between God’s chosen people, the Jews, just as much as between Gentiles and between the Gentiles and the Jews. Additionally, racism and religious persecution is nothing more than projecting onto others those aspects of our own personalities and abilities which have not been adequately affirmed by those who should have done so, especially our parents. If we are actually wise and capable of great things, but our parents and other people have made us feel stupid and incompetent, then we are most likely angry for being thus mistreated and, unfortunately, look for people towards whom we can express our anger. And those who are the most different from us because of their ethnic origin, their religion, their political affiliation, etc. become readily available targets of our anger and disappointment. As a result, we ostracize, persecute, and mistreat them in order to vent our anger while we attempt to make ourselves feel better. But we only end up feeling worse because we are not facing into the real problem, which is our refusal to acknowledge the primary source of our disappointment, that can only be assuaged by coming to grips with why we are so angry before we take it out on someone else, and then learning to understand what strengths and abilities, however small or great, we possess and appreciating them as gifts from our creator God.

Isaiah is saying that these problems of feeling severe disappointment, which exist in the Jews and in their relationships with each other, will find their solution in the Messiah and God’s changing them into people who embrace the truth about Him and themselves so that they deal with their anger in a healthy way—not through letting their envy get the best of them, but through acknowledging God’s constant loyalty (*hesed*) and faithfulness (*’emunah*) towards them. As a result, they will join the Messiah in his battle against their nearby enemies and help him to defeat and subjugate them for the sake of the Kingdom of God on the present earth. In addition, God will make it possible for the Jews who are returning from far away places to travel easily and without hindrance to the land of Israel, even drying up the Nile and Euphrates Rivers if this is necessary. And this will be just like the Exodus from Egypt when God made the impossible possible by pushing aside the waters of the Red Sea with a miraculous wind, so that the Israelites crossed on dry land.

Isaiah next describes in 12:1-4 the Jews’ spiritual and emotional response to God’s wonderful and permanent salvific actions,

12:1 Then you will say on that day,
 “I will give thanks to You, Yahweh;
 For although You were angry with me,
 Your anger is turned away,
 And You comfort me.
 12:2 “Behold, God is my salvation,
 I will trust and not be afraid;
 For Yah Yahweh is my strength and song,
 And He has become my salvation.”
 12:3 Therefore you will joyously draw water
 From the springs of salvation.
 12:4 And in that day you will say,
 “Give thanks to Yahweh, call on His name.
 Make known His deeds among the peoples;
 Make them remember that His name is exalted.”

Once the Jews return to their land, they will be living in the millennial kingdom as explained in Revelation 20 with Jesus as their permanent king. And they will acknowledge that, in the past, God

was good and right to be angry with them because of their disobedience. And they will further confess that He has changed His mind towards them (similar to what He did in Exodus 32 and Numbers 14), so that He is now bringing “comfort” and mercy to them. And on what basis is He doing this? We have to say that it is because of His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation” and to give them the land of Israel. Consequently, every Jew, because each one will be circumcised of heart, will claim that God is *his* “salvation” (ישועה *yeshu‘ah*), the name for Jesus in Hebrew; σωτήρ (*sotayr*) in the Greek Septuagint). But to be clear, the salvation to which the Jew in this passage is referring is his being rescued from Israel’s earthly enemies, e.g., from the Beast of Revelation and his armies, who will seek to annihilate all the Jews immediately preceding the appearance of their Messiah to establish the Kingdom of God. The believing Jew (and each Jew will be a believing Jew) will no longer “be afraid” of such enemies and their efforts to end his existence on earth. Certainly, he also realizes that God is granting him the other blessing of Abraham, *eternal* life, because the two promises of a “great nation” and life forever in the eternal Kingdom of God are inextricably tied together.

No believing Jew (and no believing Gentile for that matter) in history can participate in God’s fulfilling one promise without also taking part in His fulfilling the other promise. If the believing Jew or Gentile died before Jesus’ return, then he will be raised from the dead and return as an immortal and morally perfect human being to rule the world with Jesus (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:). If the believing Jew or Gentile is alive when Jesus returns, then he will ascend from the earth to meet Jesus as he descends towards Jerusalem, and he will be transformed into an immortal and morally perfect human being to rule the world with him. If the believing Jew or Gentile lives and dies during the millennial kingdom, then the Bible is clear that at least he will dwell with Jesus and all other believers as immortal and morally perfect human beings on the new, eternal earth of Revelation 21. The passages that help us understand these ideas about believing Jews and Gentiles are 1 Corinthians 15:50ff.; 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff., and Revelation 20-21.

Isaiah continues in 12:3 to speak of the metaphor of a brook of clean water that bubbles and flows out of the ground from which the believing Jew will drink and find his salvation from Israel’s enemies, which he has just described in the previous verses. In other words, David’s descendant, the Messiah, as the believing Jew’s king will always protect him from outside harm and from death at the hands of those among the Gentiles who hate him, so that he need never again be afraid. And Isaiah ends his thoughts about the millennial Jew by saying that not only will he express his gratitude to the God of Israel for rescuing him from his enemies, but he will also become a teacher of the Gentiles of exactly who God is and what He has done for the Jews. And the proclamation of this message will make it clear that God alone should be praised and honored by all human beings. I think that we can assume that some of the Gentiles will embrace this information and become authentic believers like the Jews, but probably most of them will not. Such will be the spiritual demographics of the world during Jesus’ reign as king on the land of Israel and over the whole earth. He will rule over only believing Jews on their land, and he will rule over a minority of believing Gentiles and a majority of unbelieving Gentiles who inhabit the rest of the earth.

Chapters 11 and 12 end in vs. 5-6 with an exhortation by Isaiah for his contemporaries living in Israel and in Jerusalem to “shout for joy” over God’s wonderful love for them—that, many years after their time in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., God will make them a “great nation” according to His promise, guarantee, and oath to Abraham thirteen hundred years earlier around 2000 B.C. The prophet writes, “5 Praise Yahweh in song, for He has done excellent things; let this be known throughout the earth. 6 Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.” Therefore, the Jews of Isaiah’s day may be staring the fast-approaching Assyrian invasion in the face, and the Jews of later history may be confronting oppression, persecution, and even death from their contemporaries, but the prophet encourages them to take heart in God’s character and the covenants which He has made with their ancestors, including with David.

And so should we take comfort in the midst of difficult circumstances in our lives, because God will eventually bring about the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel, and then the continuation of

this kingdom on the new and eternal earth of Revelation 21-22. Putting all this in the context of Genesis 12-22, God's *hesed* and constant faithfulness to the Jews to make them a "great nation" is the same *hesed* and constant faithfulness to all Old Testament believers and to all New Testament believers to grant them eternal life—first by participating in the restored Kingdom of Israel when Jesus returns, and then by living on the new earth of a brand new cosmos at the end of the millennial kingdom. Therefore, we should never give up faith in God. Instead, we should "Cry aloud and shout for joy,...for great in [our] midst is the Holy One of Israel" (cf. Isaiah 12:6).

Isaiah 29

- 29:1 Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city where David once camped!
Add year to year, observe your feasts on schedule.
- 29:2 I will bring distress to Ariel,
And she will be a city of lamenting and mourning;
And she will be like an Ariel to me.
- 29:3 I will camp against you encircling you,
And I will set siegeworks against you,
And I will raise up battle towers against you.
- 29:4 Then you will be brought low;
From the earth you will speak,
And from the dust where you are prostrate
Your words will come.
Your voice will also be like that of a spirit from the ground,
And your speech will whisper from the dust.
- 29:5 But the multitude of your enemies will become like fine dust,
And the multitude of the ruthless ones like the chaff which blows away;
And it will happen instantly, suddenly.
- 29:6 From Yahweh of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise,
With whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire.
- 29:7 And the multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel,
Even all who wage war against her and her stronghold, and who distress her,
Will be like a dream, a vision of the night.
- 29:8 It will be as when a hungry man dreams —
And behold, he is eating;
But when he awakens, his hunger is not satisfied,
Or as when a thirsty man dreams —
And behold, he is drinking,
But when he awakens, behold, he is faint
And his thirst is not quenched.
Thus the multitude of all the nations will be
Who wage war against Mount Zion.
- 29:9 Be delayed and wait,
Blind yourselves and be blind;
They become drunk, but not with wine,
They stagger, but not with strong drink.
- 29:10 For Yahweh has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep,
He has shut your eyes, the prophets;
And He has covered your heads, the seers.
- 29:11 The entire vision will be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, "Please read this," he will say, "I cannot, for it is sealed."
- 29:12 Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, "Please read this." And he will say, "I cannot read."
- 29:13 Then the Lord said,
"Because this people draw near with their words
And honor Me with their lip service,

- But they remove their hearts far from Me,
 And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote,
 29:14 Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelously;
 And the wisdom of their wise men will perish,
 And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.”
 29:15 Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from Yahweh,
 And whose deeds are done in a dark place,
 And they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?”
 29:16 You turn things around!
 Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay,
 That what is made would say to its maker, “He did not make me”;
 Or what is formed say to him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?
 29:17 Is it not yet just a little while
 Before Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field,
 And the fertile field will be considered as a forest?
 29:18 On that day the deaf will hear words of a book,
 And out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.
 29:19 The afflicted also will increase their gladness in Yahweh,
 And the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
 29:20 For the ruthless will come to an end and the scorner will be finished,
 Indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off;
 29:21 Who cause a person to be indicted by a word,
 And ensnare him who adjudicates at the gate,
 And defraud the one in the right with meaningless arguments.
 29:22 Therefore thus says Yahweh, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:
 “Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale;
 29:23 But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst,
 They will sanctify My name;
 Indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob
 And will stand in awe of the God of Israel.
 29:24 “Those who err in mind will know the truth,
 And those who criticize will accept instruction.

The pattern in Isaiah 29 is similar to that of many passages in the prophets. First, God indicts His chosen people, the Jews, for their disobedience, and promises that He will judge and discipline them by using their enemies to attack them and cause them great suffering (vs. 1-16). Then, God assures them that He will bring them joy and gladness as they live on their land in safety and prosperity and with authentic faith (vs. 17-24). However, this chapter provides only one clue as to the exact timing of God’s judgment, while His provision of an existence of national *shalom* is similar to other references to the end of their history when He fulfills His promise to Abraham and makes them a “great nation.” Because Isaiah mentions the latter in the same context as judgment and with only one clue as to when the judgment takes place, I suggest that this passage is describing what will happen to the Jews immediately before and during the return of Jesus as the Messiah. As there have been many times in Jewish history when God has brought suffering on them for their disobedience, e.g., the Assyrian invasion in the 8th century B.C., the Babylonian invasion in the 7th century B.C., and the Roman destruction in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., it is certainly possible that the judgment spoken of may be any one of these or all of them. And it may include the one future to us at the end of the present age. Or this judgment of Isaiah 29 could be God’s final disciplinary actions towards the Jews immediately preceding the appearance of the Messiah and his restoring the Kingdom of Israel. I think that this last option is correct because of the one clue which we will examine and because Isaiah includes so closely a description of a *shalom*-like life in the context. Therefore, God is looking far into the future from Isaiah’s day and predicting events that we have not yet seen.

In v. 1, He pronounces a curse on the city of Jerusalem, David’s city, which He calls Ariel. The word could mean the hearth of an altar, or some suggest Lion of God. At the end of v. 2, after saying

that the city will lament and mourn, God says that thus it will be like an Ariel to Him. Therefore, I think that hearth of an altar, which is the foundation of a place of sacrifice where God makes the city an offering to Himself by judging it, makes more sense. The people will truly be laid low so that it will be as though they are “whispering from the dust” when they speak (v. 4).

God also says in v. 5 that He is going to bring a “multitude of...enemies” against the Jerusalem. Is He referring to a large army or to the repeated times when Gentile nations attack the city? Or is He speaking of the many nations which will form an alliance under the leadership of the Beast of Revelation and will invade Israel and seek to annihilate the Jews (cf. Revelation 17 & 19)? The important clue for answering these questions is in v. 7, “And the multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel, even all who wage war against her and her stronghold, and who distress her, will be like a dream, a vision of the night.” I think that the phrase “multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel” leads us to conclude that God is speaking of the events of Revelation. Assyria, as one nation, attacked the northern Kingdom of Israel and briefly laid siege to Jerusalem around 700 B.C. Babylon, also as one nation, destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Rome, also as one nation, accomplished its destruction of the city in A.D. 70. But God in Isaiah 59:7 speaks of the “multitude of all the nations who wage war against” Jerusalem. And along with v. 8, we learn that these Gentile armies are going to be like a bad dream for the Jews. They can only hope that they would go away, but they will still be there—at least for a while. These details fit better with the information we have in the prophets and Revelation of the last attempt of several Gentile nations who band together to attack Israel just before Jesus returns.

But will God’s people really understand the vision which Isaiah is presenting in this passage? No, because in v. 10 Isaiah says, “Yahweh has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep,” which is an inability to grasp the truth. This may very well be the same thing to which the apostle Paul refers in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, that when the Man of Lawlessness comes on the scene, God will “send upon them [the Jews and the rest of the world?] a deluding influence, so they will believe what is false.” Isaiah also says in 29:10, “He has shut your eyes, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, the seers,” meaning that there are no authoritative, living spokesmen for God among the Jews to instruct them in what God is doing and how they should respond. He follows this in vs. 11-12 with a kind of parable, that people who are literate will claim that they cannot break the seal which will allow them to open the description of the vision and read it, while people who are illiterate will claim that they simply cannot read it even if it were open. This, too, means that God’s people are unwilling to learn the truth and incapable of understanding it even if it were taught them. As a result, they are thinking and speaking only foolishness to one another.

However, the Jews appear to be worshiping God properly, but it is only in appearance. God tells them in vs. 13-14, “13 ...“Because this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, 14 therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelously; and the wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.” They are doing *outwardly* all that the Mosaic Covenant commands them, e.g., the sacrificial and religious rituals which God requires they perform and the feasts which they must celebrate. But their faith and obedience are not from “their hearts.” Indeed, “they remove their hearts far from” God. Their obedience consists of only the words on their lips (and the actions they are performing). They have memorized what to say and do so that their words and actions have become mere habit based upon tradition. As a result, God says that He “will once again deal marvelously with this people.” However, the marvelous manner in which God will relate to the Jews again has a negative connotation. “The wisdom of their wise men will perish, and the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.” In other words, the Jewish people will hear only foolishness and nonsense from their leaders, which implies that they as followers will think, speak, and do foolishness in response.

Then in vs. 15-16, for a second time God pronounces a curse on the nation of Israel, “15 Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from Yahweh, and whose deeds are done in a dark place, and they

say, ‘Who sees us?’ or ‘Who knows us?’ **16** You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made would say to its maker, ‘He did not make me’; or what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding’?” The people of Israel are so arrogant that they think that the God who has created them does not see what they are doing behind closed doors. It is as though they imagine that they are God and God is their creation. They are the potter and He is the clay. Thus, they have “turned things around” and have rejected their place in reality, that they exist only because God has caused them to exist. They believe themselves to be omnipotent, while God is weak and puny. Here is the height of the moral depravity of human beings and their pride and arrogance.

After vs. 15-16, the tone of the passage changes to the polar opposite. Instead of judgment, doom, and gloom, God speaks of abundance, joy, and the disappearance of anyone who seeks to oppress and harm the Jews. For example, in v. 17, Isaiah says, “Is it not yet just a little while before Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field, and the fertile field will be considered as a forest?” Technically, according to the description in Genesis 15:18, Lebanon, which in ancient times was famous for its thick and abundant forests, is part of the land promised by God to the Jews. We will see that Isaiah 32:15 speaks of the same kind of thing, of the wilderness becoming a fertile field and the fertile field becoming a forest. God seems to be looking at time strictly from His perspective where the far distant future is just around the corner, because “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day” (cf. 2 Peter 3:8). Or God could be speaking of the short interval between His final disciplinary actions towards the Jews and the appearance of the Messiah to usher in the joy and *shalom* of the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel. I think that it is the latter, so that the land will become fertile and “on that day the deaf will hear words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see” (Isaiah 29:18). Very soon after His final judgment of the Jews, God will bring about a complete reversal of their spiritual condition. Instead of rejecting His truth, they will hear it, see it, and embrace it with all their hearts and minds.

Added to this, Isaiah says in v. 19, “The afflicted also will increase their gladness in Yahweh, and the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.” The word “mankind” is *Adam* (אָדָם), so that the prophet is speaking of more than just the Jews. It will be the whole world which will experience a radical change in how people treat one another. Those who have been oppressed and deprived will no longer suffer, and they will recognize that their situation is different because of the God of the Jews, whose name is Yahweh and who is the one, true God. Then Isaiah explains in vs. 20-21 what this change will comprise on a human level, “**20** For the ruthless will come to an end and the scorner will be finished. Indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off, **21** who cause a person to be indicted by a word, and ensnare him who adjudicates at the gate, and defraud the one in the right with meaningless arguments.” The powerful and wealthy, who, with evil intent, tend to use the justice system of their countries to defraud and oppress innocent people by using outlandish but somehow convincing arguments, will no longer be permitted to employ such tactics. They will be “cut off,” which may mean simply that their nefarious power and influence within society is eliminated, or that they will suffer the destructive justice and punishment of God in both the present realm and for all eternity, thereby rendering them permanently powerless to harm the weak and defenseless.

Isaiah ends this passage in vs. 22-24 with references to both Abraham and his grandson Jacob, “**22** Therefore thus says Yahweh, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: ‘Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale; **23** but when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they will sanctify My name; indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. **24** Those who err in mind will know the truth, and those who criticize will accept instruction.’” God “redeemed Abraham” by bringing him out the land of Ur of the Chaldees and leading him to the land of Israel, where He promised that “the house of Jacob” would eventually find a true homeland, safe from their enemies. So it will be as though Jacob is standing there (along with Abraham, by the way) and looking at “his children” who exist because of Yahweh. And they will be worshipping God, “the Holy One of Jacob,” while “standing in awe of

the God of Israel.” We remember that Israel is Jacob’s name after God changed it in Genesis 32. Probably Isaiah is referring to Jacob’s (and Abraham’s) own resurrection from the dead at the end of this realm so that he will literally see his descendants as God makes them a “great nation” in accordance with His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. And while the Jews used to “err in mind” throughout much of their history, now they “will know the truth.” They used to “criticize” God and refused to listen to Him, but now they “will accept instruction.” Literally they will “learn instruction” so that they will finally gain insight into the exact nature of reality as an entire nation and embrace all that God has said to them about Himself and His commandments. This is a description of none other than the millennial kingdom in Revelation 20 when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel, and God fulfills the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants.

Isaiah 30:1-26

- 30:1 “Woe to the rebellious children,” declares Yahweh,
 “Who execute a plan, but not Mine,
 And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit,
 In order to add sin to sin;
- 30:2 Who proceed down to Egypt
 Without consulting Me,
 To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh
 And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!
- 30:3 “Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame
 And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.
- 30:4 “For their princes are at Zoan
 And their ambassadors arrive at Hanes.
- 30:5 “Everyone will be ashamed because of a people who cannot profit them,
 Who are not for help or profit, but for shame and also for reproach.”
- 30:6 The oracle concerning the beasts of the Negev.
 Through a land of distress and anguish,
 From where come lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent,
 They carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys
 And their treasures on camels’ humps,
 To a people who cannot profit them;
- 30:7 Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty.
 Therefore, I have called her
 “Rahab who has been exterminated.”
- 30:8 Now go, write it on a tablet before them
 And inscribe it on a scroll,
 That it may serve in the time to come
 As a witness forever (לְעֵד עַד־עוֹלָם).
- 30:9 For this is a rebellious people, false sons,
 Sons who refuse to listen
 To the instruction of Yahweh (תּוֹרַת יְהוָה);
- 30:10 Who say to the seers, “You must not see visions”;
 And to the prophets, “You must not prophesy to us what is right,
 Speak to us pleasant words,
 Prophecy illusions.
- 30:11 “Get out of the way, turn aside from the path,
 Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.”
- 30:12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,
 “Since you have rejected this word
 And have put your trust in oppression and guile, and have relied on them,
- 30:13 Therefore this iniquity will be to you
 Like a breach about to fall,
 A bulge in a high wall,

- Whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant,
 30:14 Whose collapse is like the smashing of a potter's jar,
 So ruthlessly shattered
 That a sherd will not be found among its pieces
 To take fire from a hearth
 Or to scoop water from a cistern.”
- 30:15 For thus Adonai Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, has said,
 “In repentance and rest you will be saved (בְּשׁוּבוֹתָ וּבְנַחְתָּ תִּשְׁעוּן),
 In quietness and trust is your strength.”
 But you were not willing,
- 30:16 And you said, “No, for we will flee on horses,”
 Therefore you shall flee!
 “And we will ride on swift horses,”
 Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.
- 30:17 One thousand will flee at the threat of one man;
 You will flee at the threat of five,
 Until you are left as a flag on a mountain top
 And as a signal on a hill.
- 30:18 Therefore Yahweh longs to be gracious to you,
 And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you.
 For Yahweh is a God of justice (כִּי-אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁפַּט יְהוָה);
 How blessed are all those who long for Him.
- 30:19 O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer.
 He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry;
 when He hears it, He will answer you.
- 30:20 Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression,
 He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher.
- 30:21 Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,”
 whenever you turn to the right or to the left.
- 30:22 And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver,
 and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them
 as an impure thing, and say to them, “Be gone!”
- 30:23 Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground,
 and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous;
 on that day (בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא) your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture.
- 30:24 Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground
 will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork.
- 30:25 On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be
 streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.
- 30:26 The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun,
 and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter,
 like the light of seven days, on the day Yahweh binds up
 the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.

Isaiah 30 is speaking of a time when the southern Kingdom of Judah is feeling threatened by the invasion of the Assyrians from the north in the late 8th century B.C., and the king (kings?) of Judah seek help from Egypt in the south. However, in the latter part of the passage, God jumps forward in time to when He fulfills His earthly promise to his descendants to make them a “great nation.” We start with vs. 1-7. Here God rebukes His people for relying on human beings to protect them from their enemies instead of relying solely on Him. God then continues in vs. 8-11 to call the king of Judah and his subjects “a rebellious people” and “false sons” because they “refuse to listen to the instruction (*torah* (תּוֹרָה)) of God.” They are commanding **His** prophets to stop talking about the doom and gloom of God’s coming judgment. Instead, the people want them to speak only encouraging words, even while they persist in their immoral behavior and rebellion against God. The

result in vs. 12-14 will be that eventually their kingdom will fall like a broken wall that shatters into so many pieces that there is not even a sherd “to take fire from a hearth or to scoop water from a cistern.” In other words, the Kingdom of Judah will disappear and be no more. But God does encourage them in v. 15, “In repentance and rest [in Him] you will be saved, in quietness and trust [in Him] is your strength, but you are not willing.” Their God is always open to their humbling themselves before Him, and He will respond with forgiveness and salvation from their enemies. However, according to vs. 16-17, because the people of Judah remain so stubborn, they are going to “flee” from the land, not by escaping their enemies, but by being led captive into exile by them.

Then, in v. 18, Isaiah himself begins to bring the Abrahamic Covenant into the conversation. he declares, “Therefore Yahweh longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For Yahweh is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him.” While it could be said that God “longs to be gracious” to all people, because He simply is merciful and forgiving, waiting “on high to have compassion on” sinners who themselves “long for Him,” the context places these ideas in the relationship between Yahweh and the descendants of Abraham, the Jews. And an important clue for interpreting these statements is that the prophet declares unequivocally that “Yahweh is a God of justice.” This last word is the Hebrew noun *mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט), and while it can be translated “justice,” here it more likely refers to God’s rightness in regard to what He has already said to and promised Abraham, that He will remain constantly loving and faithful to him and his descendants in spite of their sin. In other words, God’s *mishpat* here includes His *hesed*, whereby He will make the Jews the most powerful nation in history, regardless of how little they deserve it because of their disobedience down through the millennia.

Consequently, Isaiah goes on to predict their future in the rest of the passage. For example, in v. 19 he says, “O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.” It is possible that Isaiah is only saying, “If you repent, then God will forgive you and grant you eternal life.” Nevertheless, it makes more sense to understand vs. 19-26 in the light of not only the Abrahamic Covenant and its two promises which include eternal life, but also the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants where God has promised and sworn an oath that the Israelites will eventually become a “great nation” with a permanent king ruling over them. Therefore, the prophet speaks of a time in the future when God will graciously answer their prayers for protection from their enemies, so that He will grant just exactly this. And the Jews will “weep no longer,” because they will never again be attacked by their enemies.

Indeed, they all will be a nation who receive instruction from God as Isaiah comments in vs. 20-21, “**20** Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. **21** Your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right or to the left.” Although their Adonai, their Lord, has disciplined them in the past with shortages of water and food when their enemies assaulted as a consequence for their disobedience towards God, this will never happen again. Instead, God will be their Teacher who instructs them in how to live their lives. And they all will actually listen with hearts that are finally open to His truth. As a result, whenever they consider going back to the way they rebelled against God in times past, they will hear in their minds what they have learned about biblical morality, and they will pursue it. Instead of fundamentally rebelling against God, they will have an enduring desire in their hearts and minds to obey Him.

An important effect of their willingness to obey God is that they will shun any idolatry that they committed in the past. Isaiah tells them in v. 22, “And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, and say to them, ‘Be gone!’” Plus, God will make them a prosperous nation with abundant rain for food, “**23** Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture. **24** Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork” (30:23-24). And this will be, according to v. 23, “on that day”

(*bayyom hahu*), which, because of the description of such blessing from God, must be still future to us when He fulfills His promise in the Abrahamic Covenant and the Jews become the most powerful and wealthy country in history under the leadership of their final and permanent Messiah and King, Jesus of Nazareth.

Isaiah ends this passage in vs. 25-26, “25 On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. 26 The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day Yahweh binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.” Verse 25 seems confusing by mentioning both an abundant supply of water and destruction of people and military instruments. But I think that by putting it in the context of the entire chapter with, first, the threat from the Jews’ current enemies, the Assyrians, and, second, the description of God’s fulfilling His promise to the Jews, Isaiah is predicting the defeat of Israel’s enemies when the Messiah makes his second appearance, which will usher in time a *shalom* and wonderful living for God’s people on the land of Israel. It will be then that “Yahweh binds up the fracture of His people” by bringing back together the people of the Kingdom of Israel and of the Kingdom of Judah, who split from one another around 900 B.C. In addition, “Yahweh...heals the bruise which He has inflicted” by rescuing the nation of Israel from any suffering and harm they have experienced from their enemies. Thus, the chapter assumes the Abrahamic Covenant and predicts God’s fulfilling it, which implies His completing what He has also stated through Moses to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 30 and through Nathan to David in 2 Samuel 7.

Isaiah 32

- 32:1 Behold, a king will reign righteously
And princes (לְשֹׁרֵים) will rule justly.
- 32:2 Each will be like a refuge from the wind
And a shelter from the storm,
Like streams of water in a dry country,
Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.
- 32:3 Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,
And the ears of those who hear will listen.
- 32:4 The mind of the hasty will discern the truth,
And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.
- 32:5 No longer will the fool be called noble (לֹא יִקְרָא עוֹד לְנָבֵל נָדִים),
Or the rogue be spoken of as generous.
- 32:6 For a fool speaks nonsense,
And his heart inclines toward wickedness:
To practice ungodliness and to speak error against Yahweh,
To keep the hungry person unsatisfied
And to withhold drink from the thirsty.
- 32:7 As for a rogue, his weapons are evil;
He devises wicked schemes
To destroy the afflicted with slander,
Even though the needy one speaks what is right.
- 32:8 But the noble man devises noble plans;
And by noble plans he stands.
- 32:9 Rise up, you women who are at ease,
And hear my voice;
Give ear to my word,
You complacent daughters.
- 32:10 Within a year and a few days
You will be troubled, O complacent daughters;
For the vintage is ended,
And the fruit gathering will not come.

- 32:11 Tremble, you women who are at ease;
 Be troubled, you complacent daughters;
 Strip, undress and put sackcloth on your waist,
- 32:12 Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine,
- 32:13 For the land of my people in which thorns and briars shall come up;
 Yea, for all the joyful houses and for the jubilant city.
- 32:14 Because the palace has been abandoned, the populated city forsaken.
 Hill and watch-tower have become caves forever (עֲרָבוּלָם),
 A delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks;
- 32:15 Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,
 And the wilderness becomes a fertile field,
 And the fertile field is considered as a forest.
- 32:16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness
 And righteousness will abide in the fertile field.
- 32:17 And the work of righteousness will be peace (שָׁלוֹם),
 And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever (עֲרָבוּלָם).
- 32:18 Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation (בְּנִיחָה שְׁלוֹם),
 And in secure dwellings (וּבְמִשְׁכְּנֵי מְבֹטְחִים) and in undisturbed resting places (וּבְמִנוּחֵי שְׁאֵנָה);
- 32:19 And it will hail when the forest comes down,
 And the city will be utterly laid low.
- 32:20 How blessed will you be, you who sow beside all waters,
 Who let out freely the ox and the donkey.

This chapter begins very positively in vs. 1-8 with a description of good leadership, good thinking among the people, and the disappearance of fools—all regarding Israel and the Jews we assume. Then in vs. 9-14 the prophet, whom it seems is speaking the whole time, declares to the women of Israel that “within a year and a few days” they, the land, and the kings’ palace will encounter disaster. However, vs. 15-20 move on to a time when “the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high” and there are both “righteousness” and “shalom.” with the prophet’s people living “in a peaceful habitation, . . . in secure dwellings, and in undisturbed places.” Therefore, the only direct statements about the time when these events occur are the two phrases in v. 10, “Within a year and a few days,” and in v. 15, “Until the Spirit is poured out on us.” The first phrase is connected to disaster. The second phrase is related to *shalom* and fertility. One possibility is that the disaster is occurring in Isaiah’s day (about 740-700 B.C.), so that “within a year and a few days” the Assyrians will descend upon Israel and Judah, destroying the northern kingdom and taking its ten tribes (plus a few Levites) into exile, while the *shalom* of the “king [who] will rule righteously” is the Messianic Kingdom far in the future and, indeed, still future to us. Another possibility is that the disaster and the shalom take place at around the same time, the return of the Messiah to destroy Israel’s enemies and establish his kingdom as God’s fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant promises. I think that the second option makes more sense as I will explain.

In vs. 1-2, Isaiah says, “1 Behold, a king will reign righteously and princes will rule justly. 2 Each will be like a refuge from the wind and a shelter from the storm, like streams of water in a dry country, like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.” The “king” is most likely the final, Davidic king, whom we know to be Jesus. Therefore, this is a reference to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 and God’s fulfilling His promise to provide the nation of Israel with a monarch who rules over them with righteousness and justice. The “princes” may be only Jesus’ apostles to whom he says in Matthew 19:28, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging [more probably “ruling”] the twelve tribes of Israel.” Or maybe they are all resurrected believers who will reign with Jesus during the millennial kingdom as stated in Revelation 20:6, “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” The effect of each of these

wise, good, and morally perfect leaders, Jesus and those with him, will be to calm the storms of any conflict among the Jews, because they will still be sinners, and between them and the Gentiles, some of whom will remain committed enemies of the Jews while nevertheless being unable to attack them because of Jesus' ruling the world with a "rod of iron" (cf. Psalm 2:9; Revelation 19:15). These wise leaders, especially Jesus, will provide strength and instruction which will result in *shalom* for the whole world. They will also provide teaching which leads to God's comfort for those who are starving for truth and the message of His mercy and forgiveness.

Isaiah continues in the same vein in vs. 3-4, "3 Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded, and the ears of those who hear will listen. 4 The mind of the hasty will discern the truth, and the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly." The Jews, who have repeatedly been blind and deaf to God's messages and hasty to make foolish decisions instead of wise, while also sounding like people who "stammer" because of the nonsense of their ideas, will radically change. God will make them wise and capable of seeing the truth of the Bible for what it is and speaking it confidently. Therefore, as the prophet says in vs. 5, "No longer will the fool be called noble, or the rogue be spoken of as generous." When people are unwilling to embrace God's truth, they are attracted to the stupidest of ideas, so that they even prefer leaders who speak lies to them, while calling these leaders wise, charitable, and generous. People are willing to follow them like sheep right off a cliff if the leaders direct them to go this direction. But nothing like this will happen in Messianic Israel. The Jews will be led well by Jesus and his fellow leaders, and they will recognize exactly what the truth is and obey it, even while continuing to be sinners. But their hearts of authentic belief will undergird their desire for righteousness and pursuit of obedience to and His Messiah.

Then Isaiah provides a further description of both a fool and a wise man in vs. 6-8,

- 32:6 For a fool speaks nonsense,
 And his heart inclines toward wickedness:
 To practice ungodliness and to speak error against Yahweh,
 To keep the hungry person unsatisfied
 And to withhold drink from the thirsty.
- 32:7 As for a rogue, his weapons are evil;
 He devises wicked schemes
 To destroy the afflicted with slander,
 Even though the needy one speaks what is right.
- 32:8 But the noble man devises noble plans;
 And by noble plans he stands.

The key ideas in these verses refer to Jews mainly, but they certainly apply to any sinner. Isaiah says first that the "fool...speaks error against Yahweh." In other words, he claims, for example, that the Old and New Testaments are filled with errors and false ideas so that it is best to ignore them. In this way, they reject God when there are people around them who are "hungry" and "thirsty" for truth. And all the "weapons" are "evil" that the fool uses to combat God and His biblical ideas. He "devises wicked schemes"—with military weapons, propaganda, intimidation, and deception "to destroy the afflicted with slander." And he does this "even though the needy and oppressed, who trust in God, continue to speak "what is right." The second key idea is that "the noble man devises noble plans." These are the people who are being slandered and intimidated. But they persist in being "noble" and thinking of only what is good and right to do. And they stand by what they have learned from the Bible and persevere in their faith and obedience to God.

Next, as the prophet likewise did in chapter 3, he speaks of the women and their immorality. He begins in vs. 9-10, "9 Rise up, you women who are at ease, and hear my voice; give ear to my word, you complacent daughters. 10 Within a year and a few days you will be troubled, O complacent daughters; for the vintage is ended, and the fruit gathering will not come." He accuses them of concerning themselves more with living a life of ease and luxury than with obeying God (and, by implication, doing the hard but righteous work of caring for the poor and needy). As a result, God will

bring judgment upon them, and they “will be troubled.” One element of the judgment is that the wine that they are enjoying and on which they depend for being happy will disappear. And here in v. 10 is the timing of God’s judgment on them, “within a year and a few days.” But I think that this is a colloquial and idiomatic expression that means soon. And we see in this passage that the judgment is in the context of the kingdom of the Messiah, which will follow shortly afterwards. Therefore, Isaiah is looking into the distant future regarding both the *final* judgment of the Jews and God’s fulfilling His promise to make them a “great nation.”

The prophet continues addressing the women in vs. 11-14,

- 32:11 Tremble, you women who are at ease;
 Be troubled, you complacent daughters;
 Strip, undress and put sackcloth on your waist,
 32:12 Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine,
 32:13 For the land of my people in which thorns and briars shall come up;
 Yea, for all the joyful houses and for the jubilant city.
 32:14 Because the palace has been abandoned, the populated city forsaken.
 Hill and watch-tower have become caves forever (עֲדָ-עוֹלָם),
 A delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks;

Isaiah exhorts these immoral women to repent and “put sackcloth” on their waists. They should “beat [their] breasts” for the loss of food and drink and their sin which has brought God’s judgment and discipline. Indeed, the land which belongs to Isaiah’s people, the Jews, as first promised by God in Genesis 12 will become a wasteland, filled with “thorns and briars.” The same will happen to the “joyful houses” and the “jubilant city,” most likely Jerusalem. They also will become places of desolation. Included is the king’s “palace.” He has abandoned it, and the city is empty. The hills and watch-tower where the Jews would look for invading enemies “have become caves forever (עֲדָ-עוֹלָם, ‘*ad ‘olam*),” which is to say, have become the only places of hiding and refuge for God’s people until God decides otherwise—which will be when He installs the Messiah on the throne of Jerusalem during his kingdom on earth soon afterwards. Thus, the land will be good for nothing but making happy “wild donkeys,” “flocks” of sheep, and cattle.

Fortunately, the devastation brought by God to Israel and its people is strictly temporary. Isaiah says in v. 15 that it is, “Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field is considered as a forest.” When will God pour out His Spirit on the Jewish people and circumcise all their hearts as He said in Deuteronomy 30? It will be when He fulfills His promise to Abraham and shapes them into the most powerful nation in history, and this will be when the Messiah, Jesus, returns. We have seen the same terminology in Isaiah 29 regarding Lebanon as the northern part of the land of Israel, that the wilderness will turn into a “fertile field,” and this in turn will be “considered as a forest,” lush and thick—all evidence of God’s blessing on the Jewish people just like the Spirit’s changing their hearts so that they become authentic believers in God and His Messiah, Jesus.

Further results of God’s blessing on the Jews are described in vs. 16-17, “16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness will abide in the fertile field. 17 And the work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.” The political and social atmosphere on the land of Israel will be characterized by pure justice and faithful pursuit of obedience to God’s commandments in the Mosaic Covenant, whether in the “wilderness,” because there may still be arid locations on the land, or in the “fertile field,” where food is being grown productively. Besides this, the Jews’ obedience to God, their “work” and “service” of pursuing goodness and morality with hearts of authentic faith will be moments of godly *shalom*, resulting in the quiet confidence that they are doing what they ought to do (and should have been doing as God’s chosen people during their entire history). And they will do “forever” (עֲדָ-עוֹלָם, ‘*ad ‘olam*), which again is to say for as long as God has planned from eternity past, i.e., until He brings the millennial

kingdom to an end. And the expression here of *ad 'olam* (“forever”) demonstrates how the same expression in v. 14 regarding the hills and watch-towers becoming caves *ad 'olam* (“forever”) does not mean for all eternity. A better translation is “into limited perpetuity,” which is to say, for as long as God desires something to exist, which certainly may not be for all eternity.

Isaiah goes on similarly in v. 18, “Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation, and in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places.” With the three words “habitation,” “dwellings, and “resting places,” Isaiah may be referring to the Jews’ actual houses. Or, by the thrice conveying of comparable ideas for emphasis, he may mean the whole geographical area that comprises the nation of Israel. In either case, the key words are “peaceful” (literally *shalom*), “secure,” and “undisturbed.” These point to the quality of life the Jews will experience under the leadership of their final Messiah, Jesus. Never before have they been able to enjoy their earthly existence to its fullest. Instead, their history has been characterized by periodic suffering, persecution, and heartache. Now they will experience only joy, complete security and safety, and peace throughout Jesus’ entire reign over them and the world. This is part of what it will mean for them to be a “great nation” in accordance with God’s promise in Genesis 12.

Verse 19 is confusing if we take to be speaking of the same *shalom* of vs. 15-18 and 20. But it must be a quick and brief harkening back to the disasters of vs. 9-14. Yes, Israel and its people will suffer at the hands of their enemies. This is what v. 19 reminds the reader, “And it will hail when the forest comes down, and the city will be utterly laid low.” The weather will contribute to destruction on the land, when the city, i.e., any city but mainly Jerusalem, falls to the enemy. However, this is only temporary, as v. 20 continues with the theme of *shalom*, “How blessed will you be, you who sow beside all waters, who let out freely the ox and the donkey.” Life will truly be good for the Jews in their newly revised country when Jesus restores the Kingdom of Israel and rules over the world. They will produce their food with the confidence that there will be plenty, because the available resources will have no limit. For example, water is the most important commodity in the Middle East. There is a lot of oil in the Middle East, but it does no good to drink it. On the other hand, people need water to survive. Isaiah is prophesying that the nation of Israel will have plenty of the latter. Plus, they will not have to fear that any harm will befall them or that they will lack anything which is necessary for keeping them alive. Even oxen and donkeys will be in abundance! Thus ends another reference in the prophets to the divine fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants after God has brought about His final judgment of the Jews.

Isaiah 34-35

- 34:1 Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!
Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.
- 34:2 For Yahweh’s indignation is against all the nations,
And His wrath against all their armies;
He has utterly destroyed them,
He has given them over to slaughter.
- 34:3 So their slain will be thrown out,
And their corpses will give off their stench,
And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.
- 34:4 And all the host of heaven will wear away,
And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;
All their hosts will also wither away
As a leaf withers from the vine,
Or as one withers from the fig tree.
- 34:5 For My sword is satiated in heaven,
Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom
And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.
- 34:6 The sword of Yahweh is filled with blood,

- It is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats,
 With the fat of the kidneys of rams.
 For Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah
 And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
- 34:7 Wild oxen will also fall with them
 And young bulls with strong ones;
 Thus their land will be soaked with blood,
 And their dust become greasy with fat.
- 34:8 For Yahweh has a day of vengeance,
 A year of recompense for the cause of Zion.
- 34:9 Its streams will be turned into pitch,
 And its loose earth into brimstone,
 And its land will become burning pitch.
- 34:10 It will not be quenched night or day;
 Its smoke will go up forever (לְעוֹלָם).
 From generation to generation it will be desolate;
 None will pass through it forever and ever (לְנֶצַח נְצָחִים).
- 34:11 But pelican and hedgehog will possess it,
 And owl and raven will dwell in it;
 And He will stretch over it the line of desolation
 And the plumb line of emptiness.
- 34:12 Its nobles — there is no one there
 Whom they may proclaim king —
 And all its princes will be nothing.
- 34:13 Thorns will come up in its fortified towers,
 Nettles and thistles in its fortified cities;
 It will also be a haunt of jackals
 And an abode of ostriches.
- 34:14 The desert creatures will meet with the wolves,
 The hairy goat also will cry to its kind;
 Yes, the night monster will settle there
 And will find herself a resting place.
- 34:15 The tree snake will make its nest and lay eggs there,
 And it will hatch and gather them under its protection.
 Yes, the hawks will be gathered there,
 Every one with its kind.
- 34:16 Seek from the book of Yahweh, and read:
 Not one of these will be missing;
 None will lack its mate.
 For His mouth has commanded,
 And His Spirit has gathered them.
- 34:17 He has cast the lot for them,
 And His hand has divided it to them by line.
 They shall possess it forever (עַד־עוֹלָם);
 From generation to generation they will dwell in it.
- 35:1 The wilderness and the desert will be glad,
 And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom;
 Like the crocus
- 35:2 It will blossom profusely
 And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.
 The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,
 The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

- They will see the glory of Yahweh,
The majesty of our God.
- 35:3 Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.
- 35:4 Say to those with anxious heart,
“Take courage, fear not.
Behold, your God will come with vengeance;
The recompense of God will come,
But He will save you.”
- 35:5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.
- 35:6 Then the lame will leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.
For waters will break forth in the wilderness
And streams in the Arabah.
- 35:7 The scorched land will become a pool
And the thirsty ground springs of water;
In the haunt of jackals, its resting place,
Grass becomes reeds and rushes.
- 35:8 A highway will be there, a roadway,
And it will be called the Highway of Holiness.
The unclean will not travel on it,
But it will be for him who walks that way,
And fools will not wander on it.
- 35:9 No lion will be there,
Nor will any vicious beast go up on it;
These will not be found there.
But the redeemed will walk there,
- 35:10 And the ransomed of Yahweh will return (וּפְדוּיֵי יְהוָה יָשׁוּבוּן)
And come with joyful shouting to Zion,
With everlasting joy upon their heads.
They will find gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

There is an abrupt change from Isaiah 34 to chapter 35. In the former, Isaiah spells out God’s wrath and judgment of “all the nations,” especially Edom, southeast of Israel, as said in vs. 5 & 6, “5 For My sword is satiated in heaven. Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom and upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction. 6 The sword of Yahweh is filled with blood. It is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For Yahweh has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.” I think that chapter 34 is describing God’s judgment of the nations who will come against Israel with their “armies” in the last days before the Messiah appears and establishes his kingdom (cf. 34:2). But God will destroy these “armies” and rescue the Jews from their murderous intent to annihilate them. “For Yahweh has a day of vengeance and a year of recompense” towards Israel’s enemies and “for the cause of Zion,” the Jews (v. 8). And the prophet singles out Edom for its particularly harsh treatment of the Jews historically. It will truly become a long-term wasteland “from generation to generation,” which only animals will inhabit when the Spirit of God “has gathered them” there (cf. vs. 34:10,16,17).

In contrast, chapter 35, which we will look at more closely, describes a paradisaical situation in Israel. Many people, with their various philosophies and worldviews, have attempted to argue how we human beings can create a pure utopia on earth. Even Christians have added their voices, thinking that the Bible actually encourages the Church to produce the Kingdom of God on earth. But all these theories and attempts have and will fail, because it will be God alone who bring about His kingdom, first on the land of Israel with its permanent king, Jesus the Messiah, and then over the rest of the world when he rules them “with a rod of iron” (even though the Gentile nations will contain a mixture

of believers and unbelievers, while the nation of Israel will be the only society where everyone will have a heart circumcised and changed by God).

In vs. 1-2, Isaiah begins this particular description of the millennial kingdom, “**1** The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus **2** it will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of Yahweh, the majesty of our God.” God will transform the wilderness and desert areas of the land of Israel into beautiful gardens of colorful flowers similar to the crocus, a small iris plant that produces bright purple, white, or yellow flowers. And Isaiah personifies the desert and wilderness, declaring that they will rejoice in what God is doing when He blesses Israel at the end of the present realm.

Then, in vs. 3-4, the prophet goes on to encourage the Jews who are weary of their oppressive situation in whatever time or whatever place they live in history, especially during their final judgment by God before Jesus’ return, “**3** Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. **4** Say to those with anxious heart, ‘Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, but He will save you.’” Isaiah exhorts those Jews who are running out of steam, physically and spiritually, to reach down deep within them and use whatever energy they can find to persevere in suffering under God’s judgment and the mistreatment by their enemies. And they can “take courage” and “fear not” because God will never abandon them completely. He will pour out His vengeance and wrath on their enemies who are oppressing them. They will not get away with doing evil to God’s chosen people, the nation of Israel. Instead, God will pay back the Jews’ enemies for their rebellion against Him, while at the same time rescuing the Jews from their purposes and intents.

This will include what Isaiah describes in vs. 5-7,

- 35:5** Then the eyes of the blind will be opened
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.
- 35:6** Then the lame will leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.
For waters will break forth in the wilderness
And streams in the Arabah.
- 35:7** The scorched land will become a pool
And the thirsty ground springs of water;
In the haunt of jackals, its resting place,
Grass becomes reeds and rushes.

God will bring about a reversal of adverse physical conditions which the Jews are suffering. If they are blind, they will see. If they are deaf, they will hear. If they cannot walk, they will “leap like a deer.” If they cannot speak, they will talk up a storm. And all this will happen while the parts of the land of Israel that are very desert-like and lack permanent rivers and streams, such as the Arabah, the Jordan Valley between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, will all of sudden gain these. In this way the people and the land which God promised them in His covenant with Abraham will together become the “great nation” of Genesis 12:2. Verse 7 says the same, “The scorched land will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, its resting place, grass becomes reeds and rushes.”

Then in v. 8 Isaiah speaks of a sacred road, “A highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it.” This is most likely a road that leads to Jerusalem, the center of worship of God in Israel. It will go through what was previously a complete desert where no one in ancient times would have thought of building one. And it will have a special name, “The Way of Holiness,” because only those, especially Jews, who have authentic faith and the Spirit of God poured out on them (cf. Isaiah 32:15) will travel on it. There will be no one of unbelief who uses the road to return to the land of Israel, because only believing Jews, whose hearts have been changed by

the Spirit of God, will be alive from this point on. In addition, no Gentile who rejects the truth of God and rebels against Him will even be attracted to going to Jerusalem. During the millennial kingdom when Jesus rules from his capital city, Gentiles who lack changed hearts and authentic faith will have no interest in traveling to Israel and getting that close to the Jewish Messiah. They will remain “fools” and stay home, enveloped in their unbelief and continued rebellion against God. Nevertheless, as we have already seen, Jesus will rule them so strongly that they will at least outwardly fall in line with his moral commandments. They will comply with the required *shalom* of his authority.

And this sacred highway will be a completely safe road as the prophet says in the first part of v. 9, “No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it; these will not be found there.” The only inhabitants of these desert places where there were no roads in the past were lions and other fierce and deadly animals. But, as explained in Isaiah 11:11, God will render these vicious beasts docile and tame during Jesus’ reign on earth, so that “the wolf will lie down with the lamb, the leopard...with the young goat, and the calf...with the young lion.” The entire natural order will radically change when Jesus returns and establishes his kingdom. Thus, Isaiah means here in 35:9 that no deadly lion or deadly beast will threaten or harm the travelers of true faith on their way to the capital city of the kingdom, Jerusalem.

Instead, Isaiah predicts in the rest of v. 9 and in v. 10, “9...But the redeemed will walk there, 10 and the ransomed of Yahweh will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.” Only those Jews who are being freed from their enemies will be found on this road by which they are returning to the one place on this earth which God has promised to Abraham’s descendants with its focal point the city of Jerusalem. And they will travel with unlimited joy and happiness in their hearts and minds, shouting and singing their praises to God who has finally given them the safety and security He swore to give them from the time of Abraham. Never again will they experience sorrow or sadness that has come repeatedly to the Jews during the course of history. Antisemitism and all other mistreatment and belittling of any ethnic group, will disappear from the earth under Jesus’ leadership. This is what God guaranteed in Genesis 15 (and in other passages where He reiterated the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants).

Isaiah 40:1-11; 27-31

- 40:1 “Comfort (נַחֲמֵנָה), O comfort My people,” says your God.
 40:2 “Speak kindly (עַל־לֵב) to Jerusalem;
 And call out to her, that her warfare has ended,
 That her iniquity has been removed,
 That she has received of Yahweh’s hand
 Double for all her sins.”
 40:3 A voice is calling,
 “Clear the way for Yahweh in the wilderness;
 Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.
 40:4 “Let every valley be lifted up,
 And every mountain and hill be made low;
 And let the rough ground become a plain,
 And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
 40:5 Then the glory of Yahweh will be revealed,
 And all flesh (כָּל־בְּשָׂר) will see it together;
 For the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.”
 40:6 A voice says, “Call out.”
 Then he answered, “What shall I call out?”
 All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.
 40:7 The grass withers, the flower fades,
 When the breath of Yahweh blows upon it;
 Surely the people are grass.

40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever (וְדְבַר־יְהוָה יָקוּם לְעוֹלָם).

40:9 Get yourself up on a high mountain,
O Zion, bearer of good news,
Lift up your voice mightily,
O Jerusalem, bearer of good news;
Lift it up, do not fear.
Say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”

40:10 Behold, Adonai Yahweh will come with might,
With His arm ruling for Him.
Behold, His reward (שְׂכָרוֹ) is with Him
And His recompense (וּפְעֻלָּתוֹ) before Him.

40:11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,
In His arm He will gather the lambs
And carry them in His bosom;
He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

40:27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel,
“My way is hidden from Yahweh,
And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”?

40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth
Does not become weary or tired.
His understanding is inscrutable.

40:29 He gives strength to the weary,
And to him who lacks might He increases power.

40:30 Though youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly,

40:31 Yet those who wait for Yahweh
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.

This chapter begins with a statement of encouragement to the Jews. God says through Isaiah in v. 1, “Comfort, O comfort My people.” The Hebrew imperative *nachamu* (נַחֲמוּ) is translated in the Greek Septuagint with *parakaleite* (παρακαλεῖτε), the same verb (and corresponding noun) that the apostle Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, “3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort (παρακλήσεως, *paraklayseos*), 4 who comforts (παρακαλῶν, *parakalon*) us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort (παρακαλεῖν, *parakalein*) those who are in any affliction with the comfort (παρακλήσεως, *paraklayseos*) with which we ourselves are comforted (παρακαλούμεθα, *parakaloumetha*) by God.”

1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort (παρακλήσεως, *paraklayseos*),

1:4 who comforts (παρακαλῶν, *parakalon*) us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort (παρακαλεῖν, *parakalein*) those who are in any affliction with the comfort (παρακλήσεως, *paraklayseos*) with which we ourselves are comforted (παρακαλούμεθα, *parakaloumetha*) by God.

1:5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort (παρακλήσεως, *paraklayseos*) is abundant through Christ.

1:6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort (παρακλήσεως, *paraklayseos*) and salvation; or if we are comforted (παρακαλούμεθα, *parakaloumetha*), it is for your comfort (παρακλήσεως,

paraklayseos), which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer;

1:7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort (*παρακλήσεως, paraklayseos*).

Thus, ten times Paul employs the same word and idea, that God does something very important and helpful towards Paul and the co-author of his letter, Timothy, so that that they can do the same towards the Corinthian Christians. Paul and Timothy “comfort” their readers who are followers of God. And they thus encourage all Christians in the midst of their “affliction” to continue to believe that God will remain loyal and faithful to them until He has fulfilled His promises to them. In the case of Paul’s mostly Gentile Christian readers in Corinth, he refers to their “salvation,” which we learn from the rest of the New Testament comprises the promise in Genesis 12:1-3 of participating in the “great nation” of the Jews and the promise of obtaining the blessing of Abraham in the form of eternal forgiveness and life. Both these promises may be in view in Isaiah 40, but I think that God’s focus is on the Jews’ becoming a “great nation” since He is speaking to them in the midst of their “affliction” (to use Paul’s word).

There are certain clues in Isaiah 40 as to what time in history the prophet is referring, starting with v. 2, “Speak kindly to Jerusalem; and call out to her, that her warfare has ended, that her iniquity has been removed, that she has received of Yahweh’s hand double for all her sins.” Isaiah literally says, “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem,” meaning to the Jewish people only, that their “warfare,” or more likely, their “hard labor” of suffering under the oppression of their enemies “has ended.” And why? Because their “iniquity has been removed,” which is to say that their sins have been forgiven. They have “received of Yahweh’s hand double” for their sins. This is likely some kind of hyperbole or symbolic indication of the complete forgiveness that the Jews have obtained from their God. So there is a combination of things that God says has happened. The Jews have ended their “hard labor.” They have also come to the end of their iniquity, or the time that they have spent enduring the penalty of their iniquity. And they have obtained forgiveness for their sins.

But when and how does all this happen? It seems best to think that these three things come together when Jesus the Messiah returns to establish his earthly kingdom. And, very importantly, they also are the effect of his first appearance. When Jesus initially lived on this earth, he died on the cross to qualify to be the Jews’ (and Gentiles’) advocate before God and thereby acquire eternal forgiveness on their behalf. In addition, we learn from the Old Testament prophets that God’s judgment and disciplinary actions towards the Jews for their disobedience finally comes to an end when the Messiah establishes the Kingdom of God on earth, so that they will never again endure mistreatment by their enemies. Why will God’s judgments of the Jews end? Because, according to passages such as Deuteronomy 30, God circumcises the hearts of all remaining and living Jews when He fulfills His promise to make them a “great nation.” This means that they all become inwardly obedient to God and justified. Thus, they stand to obtain His eternal mercy and forgiveness. Consequently, it makes more sense to understand Isaiah 40 as referring to the end of the present realm when Jesus returns than to any other time in Jewish history.

John 1:23 states, “[John the Baptist] said, ‘I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Make straight the way of the Lord,”’ as Isaiah the prophet said.” But is Isaiah referring specifically to John the Baptist in vs. 3-5?

40:3 A voice is calling,

“Clear the way for Yahweh in the wilderness;

Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.

40:4 “Let every valley be lifted up,

And every mountain and hill be made low;

And let the rough ground become a plain,

And the rugged terrain a broad valley;

40:5 Then the glory of Yahweh will be revealed,

And all flesh (כָּל־בְּשָׂר) will see it together;
For the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.”

It seems to me that these verses of the prophet, written approximately seven hundred years before John the Baptist, are also speaking of a time that is future to him. Isaiah speaks of the time when “the glory of Yahweh will be revealed,” which could be when Jesus first appears and proclaims himself as the Messiah and bears witness to this fact by performing what were probably hundreds, if not thousands, of miracles. Nevertheless, in this context, I think that Isaiah’s reference to God’s glory being revealed is when Jesus returns. At that time, which is obviously still future to us, “all flesh,” which means in this context all the Jews living on the land of Israel, “will see it together.” These members of God’s chosen people will see with their own eyes the glorious return of their Messiah, the Son of God, who will demonstrate Yahweh to them because he is the very embodiment of God within the creation. God’s glory will also be Jesus’ glory, because, as he states in Matthew 25:31, he will reside in Jerusalem and “sit on his glorious throne.”

And exactly who will be the “voice” at this future time? The passage does not tell us. Maybe it is “Elijah” to whom we will see that the last two verses of the Old Testament, Malachi 4:4-5, refer. And what will this voice say? First, “Clear the way for Yahweh in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah 40:3). Then in v. 4, “Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley.” Perhaps the prophet expects the actual topography to change in Israel, that there will be such radical geological shifts that the mountains of Israel will fall and the valleys will rise. Or perhaps he means that God will alter the spiritual topography of the Jews so that each and every one who is still living after all God’s judgments on them have been executed becomes inwardly changed and an authentic believer in God and His Messiah, Jesus. I am inclined to think that the prophet means the latter as God demonstrates just how glorious He is by making the nation of Israel the “great nation” of believers and the greatest power in history with Jesus ruling over them.

This is in line with Isaiah’s next statements in vs. 6-8 on behalf of God,

40:6 A voice says, “Call out.”

Then he answered, “What shall I call out?”

“All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.

40:7 The grass withers, the flower fades,

When the breath of Yahweh blows upon it;

Surely the people are grass.

40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades,

But the word of our God stands forever (וְדַבְר־אֱלֹהֵינוּ יָקוּם לְעוֹלָם).”

Now we have another voice that says, “Call out.” Who is this? Probably God Himself or some other divine messenger, because the previous voice then answers, “What shall I call out?” And the new voice says that he should announce that “all flesh is grass,” etc. In other words, “the people [specifically of Israel, but by extrapolation all mankind] are grass.” They wither through disease, war, accident, or old age and die, disappearing from existence in this realm. They are no longer part of God’s story until He brings about the two resurrections as described in John 5 and Revelation 20. In contrast, the voice says, “the word of our God stands forever (*le ‘olam*).” And what “word” or message is meant here? Certainly it includes God’s promises to Abraham to transform his descendants into the “great nation” of the millennial kingdom and to bless Abraham and similar believers with eternal life. Human beings come and go, live and die, exist and then cease to exist. But what about God and the messages which He has communicated to mankind through the Jews? They never stop existing and never disappear into the ether. God is eternal, and what He has promised, He will fulfill. And no one will stop Him. Therefore, all the more reason that God can say in v. 1 to the

Jews of Jerusalem, “Comfort, O Comfort [Be encouraged!], My people.” They should all look forward to His following through on everything which He has promised, guaranteed, and sworn.

Then, in v. 9, the prophet commands the people of Jerusalem to make a bold and confident announcement to the rest of their people living on the land of Judah, i.e., Israel,

40:9 Get yourself up on a high mountain,
 O Zion, bearer of good news,
 Lift up your voice mightily,
 O Jerusalem, bearer of good news;
 Lift it up, do not fear.
 Say to the cities of Judah,
 “Here is your God!”

The city dwellers are to declare at the top of their lungs to their fellow Jews that God is present among them. This is their “good news” (מְבַשֵּׁרֶת, *mebassereth* in Hebrew; ὁ εὐαγγελιζόμενος, *ho euangelizomenos* in Greek, from which we get our word evangelism). In addition, God urges them, “Do not fear,” something He says to the people of Israel at least fourteen times in the Old Testament prophets—because He has great and wonderful plans for their future, to make them a strong, prosperous, and righteous people of authentic belief and obedience.

And when is it that God is there among the Jews, that the city dwellers can “say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’”? When the exiles in Babylon return to Jerusalem seventy years after their captivity had begun in 605 B.C.? Or when Jesus first appears and suffers death on the cross, rises from the dead, and ascends from the earth? Or when Jesus returns and establishes his kingdom over the Jews and the entire world? I think that the last option makes the most sense because of the following verses of 10-11,

40:10 Behold, Adonai Yahweh will come with might,
 With His arm ruling for Him.
 Behold, His reward (שְׂכָרוֹ) is with Him
 And His recompense (וּפְעֻלָּתוֹ) before Him.
 40:11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,
 In His arm He will gather the lambs
 And carry them in His bosom;
 He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

Isaiah says that God “will come with might.” But if the people of Jerusalem are shouting the good news of His presence, the Hebrew verb is better translated “has come” and therefore is already there, so that He is not leaving the Jewish people ever again. Indeed, His “arm” is “ruling” and His “might” and strength are achieving His purposes so that He is fulfilling His eternal plans, the center of which is to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth and then the new earth as described in Revelation 20-22. Therefore, this language fits better with Jesus’ return and God’s fulfilling His promise to make the nation of Israel great as the prophet goes on to indicate. He will “tend His flock,” and “in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom,” while also gently leading “the nursing ewes,” all metaphorical references to God’s chosen people, the Jews, who will experience His loving and mighty protection from their enemies and providential care of their physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. God will grant them all *shalom* as they live on the land of Israel under Jesus’ rule and leadership.

And this will be God’s “reward” and “recompense,” literally wage, towards them. Not because the Jews have earned His grace, mercy, forgiveness, and fulfillment of His promise to Abraham, but because He has chosen to respond to them according to His guarantee and oath in spite of their sin. But God will also reward and pay the appropriate wage to all those, Jews and Gentiles, who continue to be unwilling to commit their hearts to Him. They will incur His wrath, condemnation, and eternal

destruction. Our conclusion here is that God “rewards” His people with salvation from their enemies and with even eternal forgiveness as the apostle Paul describes in Colossians 3:23-24, “**23** Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, **24** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” Paul is speaking to slaves whom he is encouraging to do their work for their masters with authentic faith so that they can eventually receive the inheritance of eternal life from God—not because they have earned it, but because this will be God’s promised response to anyone who lives his life with the primary desire to obtain entrance into the Kingdom of God *by His grace*. In this way, Paul is using a business term that normally includes the connotation of making oneself worthy of his salary and wage in the context of biblical grace and mercy where the word lacks this meaning. On the other hand, Paul uses the same terminology to refer to what unbelievers will earn from God, His condemnation. For example, he tells the Christians in 2 Thessalonians 1:6, “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you.” Unbelievers who persecute Christians *earn* their eternal punishment from God. I think that Isaiah is using the words “reward” and “recompense” with the same nuances in v. 10.

I do not quote vs. 12-26 where Isaiah points out the magnitude of God in comparison to the creation and human beings. All the nations are a “drop from a bucket” or a “speck of dust on scales.” They are “as nothing before” God. He is the only eternal and completely independent being, while we are characters in His story who are entirely dependent on Him for our strength, thoughts, and decisions at every moment of our existence. In the light of these truths, the prophet asks in v. 27, “Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from Yahweh, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God?’” Even though the question is obviously addressed to the Jews, all of us sinful human beings easily adopt the perspective that we can hide our thoughts and actions from God so that we can literally get away with murder.

But in v. 28 Isaiah goes on to ask the rhetorical question, “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, Yahweh, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.” It should be obvious to everyone that God is not only an eternal being, but also He never sleeps, even if a person says that he does not believe in God. According to the apostle Paul in Romans 1, there are no atheists, only people who pretend to be such. We all know not only that God exists, but also that we are each one of us accountable to Him and eternally condemned if we do not believe in Him, obey Him, and appeal for mercy from Him. Therefore, both the Jews, to whom Isaiah is asking his question, and all Gentiles know that God is “everlasting” and eternal. We all know that He has created everything that we can see, touch, and hear. He never snoozes, naps, or sleeps. He is constantly awake so that His “understanding is inscrutable,” which is to say that it is so vast and complete in the midst of His creating, observing, and contemplating the minutest details, even the smallest sub-atomic particles which, according to our best estimates, comprise this universe of two hundred billion galaxies. In our arrogance, we human beings think that we are so smart. But our knowledge and understanding are less than puny in comparison to what God understands. Therefore, there is no place we can hide from Him.

Indeed, according to vs. 29-31,

40:29 He gives strength to the weary,
And to him who lacks might He increases power.
40:30 Though youths grow weary and tired,
And vigorous young men stumble badly,
40:31 Yet those who wait for Yahweh
Will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary.

No one can help God and lend Him strength and power. It is the exact opposite. If any human being is going to live with any level of strength and ability even to draw one breath into his lungs, it will be God who causes him to do so. Is Isaiah referring to any specific time in history when the Jews, “who wait for Yahweh, will gain new strength,” who “will mount up with wings like eagles,” and who “will walk and not become weary?” Again, in this context, I think that Isaiah is speaking of the millennial kingdom—when the strain and oppression from their enemies, which has drained even the youths of energy, disappears for the Jews who inhabit the land of Israel. They will always find physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual refreshment in God and their king, the Messiah, who will be ruling them from Jerusalem.

As a result, I suggest that, in Isaiah 40, God and the prophet are communicating their ideas on the basis of the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic Covenants. God wants the Jews who read this and who suffer under His judgments, especially immediately before the Messiah’s return, to find comfort and encouragement, both in His exhortations through the prophet and in His promises to Abraham and his descendants, including Moses and David. Israel’s history has been and will for a while continue to be filled with hardship, discouragement, and fatigue. But there will come a time when all these disappear so that, under the rule of Jesus after he returns, they will never suffer again.

Isaiah 42:1-13

- 42:1 “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations (מוֹשֵׁט לְגוֹיִם יוֹצִיא).
- 42:2 “He will not cry out or raise His voice,
Nor make His voice heard in the street.
- 42:3 “A bruised reed He will not break
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;
He will faithfully bring forth justice (מוֹשֵׁט).
- 42:4 “He will not be disheartened or crushed
Until He has established justice in the earth (עַד-יָשִׁים בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹשֵׁט);
And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law (וְיִלְתְּוּ רָחוֹב).”
- 42:5 Thus says God Yahweh,
Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,
Who gives breath to the people on it
And spirit to those who walk in it,
- 42:6 “I am Yahweh, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people (וְאֶתְנַתְּנָה לְבְרִית עִם),
As a light to the nations (לְאֹר גוֹיִם),
- 42:7 To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.
- 42:8 “I am Yahweh, that is My name;
I will not give My glory to another,
Nor My praise to graven images.
- 42:9 “Behold, the former things have come to pass,
Now I declare new things;
Before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.”
- 42:10 Sing to Yahweh a new song,
Sing His praise from the end of the earth (מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ)!
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it.
You islands, and those who dwell on them.

- 42:11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices,
 The settlements where Kedar inhabits.
 Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud,
 Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.
- 42:12 Let them give glory to Yahweh
 And declare His praise in the coastlands.
- 42:13 Yahweh will go forth like a warrior,
 He will arouse His zeal like a man of war.
 He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.
 He will prevail against His enemies.

Here in Isaiah 42 God speaks to someone who is serving Him in a grand way. He says in v. 1, “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations (אֲנִי יְהוָה לְגוֹיִם לְמִשְׁפָּט).” Who could possibly “bring forth justice to the nations”? Could it be the people of Israel, the Jews? Yes, if we take into account God’s promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation.” This greatness could include their displaying and demonstrating authentic, biblical justice to the world when they all become individuals of genuine belief with hearts that have been changed by the Spirit of God. But it also could be a single individual, indeed, the King of Israel, their Messiah, as spoken of in Psalm 2:9, who will rule the world, Jews and Gentiles, with “a rod of iron” and not allow anyone to get away with crimes against God and his fellow human beings. Thus, God will be delighted and pleased with everything he does. And because He has placed His Spirit on him (and therefore in him), he will perform his role as King and ruler with absolute moral perfection. So while the nation of Israel will serve God in an important way, they will still be sinners, while they show the Gentiles how to obey God with genuine inner faith and belief. On the other hand, it will be their morally perfect King, the very icon and image of God, Jesus of Nazareth (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15), who will govern and lead them and the Gentile nations. Therefore, I think that it makes more sense to interpret the “Servant” here in Isaiah 42:1 as Jesus and not the collection of the Jewish people.

In addition, God’s servant “2 will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; he will faithfully bring forth justice” (vs. 2-3). This sounds like a very peaceful servant, indeed a pacifist, someone who shuns conflict, violence, and war. Therefore, we have two options for how to interpret this aspect the Servant. It could refer to Jesus when he returns, and even though he destroys Israel’s enemies who have invaded the land and are intent on annihilating them, nevertheless he does not harm people who are being oppressed. Rather, he heals these “bruised reeds” and encourages the “dimly burning wicks.” Or, God may be speaking of Jesus during his first appearance two thousand years ago. The Old Testament is clear that the Messiah will eventually be a man of violence and war and will use every military means at his disposal when he establishes the Kingdom of God on earth and rids the land of Israel of their enemies. But when Jesus first appeared, he showed no signs of doing this, which is most likely why the Jews rejected him as their king and champion. They were basically wondering, “Where is your army, and how are you going to defeat the Romans and expel them from the land which God has given to only us?” His implied answer was that he first had to die on a cross, rise from the dead, ascend from the earth, and then return later.

I think that God is speaking of the second option in vs. 2-3. He is talking about Jesus during only his initial visit to the Jewish people. He was a fairly quiet and peaceful man who proclaimed to large and small crowds that he was their Messiah, performed astonishing miracles, and offended the Jewish leadership who demanded the Romans execute him, which they did. In other words, other people may have extinguished him through his suffering death on the cross, but he did not disturb them, except the businessmen in the temple. But his death and subsequent resurrection and ascension were necessary as the means by which he would eventually “bring for justice to the nations” when he returns.

God continues describing His servant's experience in v. 4, "He will not be disheartened or crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for his law." Why would God have to mention the possibility of His servant's being "disheartened or crushed" if he did not go through some very discouraging circumstances, such as being arrested, tried by liars, and put to death by the cruel manner of crucifixion? Consequently, He is stating that this servant, Jesus the Messiah, will accomplish his goal of establishing justice on the earth during his second appearance only by encountering the most discouraging events imaginable during his initial time on earth. And one important effect of Jesus' fulfilling his role as God has required is that "the coastlands," i.e., the Gentiles, will look forward to their own opportunity to hear Jesus' "law," which in Hebrew is his *torah* (תּוֹרָה)—his teachings, instructions, and commandments. Certainly, Gentile Christians have been learning about Jesus and what he taught since his first coming. But in the context of establishing justice on the earth, I think that this is referring to the millennial kingdom when Gentile believers will enjoy all the great knowledge, wisdom, and understanding that will emanate from Jesus in Jerusalem as he rules over the Jews and the world.

Then, in vs. 5-7, God speaks directly to His servant,

42:5 Thus says God Yahweh,

Who created the heavens and stretched them out,
Who spread out the earth and its offspring,
Who gives breath to the people on it
And spirit to those who walk in it,

42:6 "I am Yahweh, I have called You in righteousness,

I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations,

42:7 To open blind eyes,

To bring out prisoners from the dungeon
And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

The English translation of v. 5 uses the past tense for the first three verbs, "created," "stretched out," and "spread out." But the present tense makes more sense. Yes, according to Genesis 1, God brought the "heavens" into existence (past tense). Nevertheless, He continues to bring them into existence every moment. God is telling a story, and everything that is in the story at every second exists because He causes it to do so for as long as He wants. This is the same with people and their breathing and their making choices. These exist also only because God creates them exactly as He wants them to be at every moment.

And in v. 6 God addresses Himself to His servant to tell him that He is Yahweh, who has summoned him into existence "in righteousness," meaning in the context of God's morally perfect intentions and actions within the creation. He says, too, that He will "hold [him] by the hand and watch over" him. He will thus be with him and guide him through the life which he must live in order to fulfill all God's requirements. The result will be that God will "appoint [him] as a covenant to the people." This most likely refers to the New Covenant as God describes in Jeremiah 31:31-34, that Jesus becomes the very instrument of God's providing complete and eternal forgiveness for the sins of believing Jews (and of any Gentiles of authentic faith), which has not been possible with the Mosaic Covenant and its animal sacrifices. When we get to Jeremiah 31, we will look at this issue in more detail. But, as Jesus says in John 5:19, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner." Thus, God was holding Jesus by the hand so to speak and watching over him just as much as Jesus was constantly looking to the Father, Yahweh, for whatever he was supposed to be doing. And we can assume that this same dynamic between God the Father and God the Son will exist when Jesus returns, restores the Kingdom of Israel, and rules over the world for the duration of the present realm.

God also says in v. 6 that he is appointing Jesus “as a light to the nations,” i.e., to the Gentiles. Jesus brings truth and illumination of who God is and what His eternal plans and purposes not only to the Jews for the sake of keeping His first promise to Abraham, but also to the rest of the world and the Gentile peoples for the sake of keeping His second promise to Abraham. God will make the Jews the most powerful nation in history, and He will grant eternal life to any Gentile who imitates Abraham’s faith. These Old Testament promises and truths Jesus announced and bore witness to as the Messiah at his first appearance. And he will be the central means by which God brings these promises and truths to fruition when he returns and inaugurates the millennial kingdom. It will be the context in which these promises and truths will remain in effect as long as the present realm of this universe exists with this temporary earth. Thus, Jesus’ revelation of the truth of God will allow for opening “blind eyes,” along with releasing “prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison” (v. 7). Some of the spiritually dull and rebellious among the Gentiles will find themselves sharp and obedient to God in their hearts and minds. This has definitely already happened since Jesus’ first appearance, but it will also be the case after his return and God makes it clear that He is keeping both promises to Abraham of Genesis 12:1-3.

In v. 8 God continues, “I am Yahweh, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.” Thus, He states explicitly that He exists as the one true God whose name is “He Is,” my translation of the Hebrew word *yahweh* (יְהוָה). God is the only person who simply is, from eternity past and into eternity future, and without anyone else causing Him to exist. He is completely independent of all other beings. In fact, if any other persons or things exist, it is because He has caused them to exist by virtue of His creating them.

He also declares that He will not allow any sinful human being to get away with worshiping “graven images,” with believing that the forces of nature, even the universe, ultimately rule over our lives—as if God does not exist. No, only He is the author of reality, including the source of all the elements of the creation which we need as human beings to sustain our lives—the sun and its light and warmth, the moon and its light at night, the rain for watering plants for food, etc. While the ancient Near Eastern people made “images” to represent the forces of nature, we moderns simply imagine these forces in our minds as extending to the boundaries of the universe and use them to ignore God. According to the prophets of Isaiah through Malachi, the Jews also had a habit of rejecting their God, and they will continue this habit up to the time when the Messiah returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel. But God is a jealous God and rightly demands that everyone worship and attribute to only Him all that He provides for our existences, even the air that we breathe and the strength to draw it into our lungs until He decides that it is time to end our existences on this earth.

Then God tells His servant in v. 9, “Behold, the former things have come to pass. Now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you.” When the Messiah and final King of Israel completes his required task of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, God will provide him with accurate information regarding what He will be doing during the time of this kingdom—just as God led and guided Jesus during his first appearance (cf. John 5:19, which I quoted above).

Isaiah ends this passage with vs. 10-13,

- 42:10 Sing to Yahweh a new song,
Sing His praise from the end of the earth (מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ)!
You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it.
You islands, and those who dwell on them.
- 42:11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voices,
The settlements where Kedar inhabits.
Let the inhabitants of Sela sing aloud,
Let them shout for joy from the tops of the mountains.
- 42:12 Let them give glory to Yahweh
And declare His praise in the coastlands.
- 42:13 Yahweh will go forth like a warrior,
He will arouse His zeal like a man of war.

He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry.
He will prevail against His enemies.

The last line of these verses confirms that the prophet is ultimately looking far into the future when God will fulfill His promise to make the Jews a “great nation.” This is when “He will prevail against His enemies,” when Jesus returns and destroys the Beast of Revelation’s final attempt to annihilate the Jews before the millennial kingdom. In addition, God will judge and destroy all unbelievers at the end of this kingdom at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20, but I think that Isaiah is referring to the former. Therefore, he is encouraging all the peoples of the earth, both Jews and Gentiles at this future time of God’s destruction of Israel’s enemies to sing praises to God. These will include the “settlements where Kedar inhabits,” meaning the northern tribes of Arabia who are Bedouins. And there will be the “inhabitants of Sela,” who generally live southeast of the land of Israel in Edom or Moab. All the people should “shout for joy from the tops of the mountains” and anywhere else that the Jews on their land and the Gentiles in the rest of the world reside. They will “give glory to Yahweh and declare His praise” to the far reaches of the earth. Again, why will the people be so joyful? Because “Yahweh will go forth like a warrior” and “raise a war cry” against His and the Jews’ enemies. The result will be that God’s people will finally become the “great nation” of Genesis 12:2 and live securely and safely on the land which He swore to give them. No one will ever harm or persecute them throughout the rest of their history in the present realm. And all this will happen as fulfillments of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants.

Isaiah 43:1-7

- 43:1 But now, thus says Yahweh, your Creator, O Jacob,
And He who formed you, O Israel,
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are Mine!
- 43:2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you.
- 43:3 “For I am Yahweh your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I have given Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your place.
- 43:4 “Since you are precious in My sight,
Since you are honored and I love you,
I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life.
- 43:5 “Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring (אֶת־בְּנֵי־ךָ) from the east,
And gather you (אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל) from the west.
- 43:6 “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’
And to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’
Bring My sons from afar
And My daughters from the ends of the earth (בְּמִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ),
- 43:7 Everyone who is called by My name,
And whom I have created for My glory,
Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”
- 43:8 Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes,
And the deaf, even though they have ears.
- 43:9 All the nations have gathered together
So that the peoples may be assembled.
Who among them can declare this
And proclaim to us the former things?

Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified,
Or let them hear and say, "It is true."

43:10 "You are My witnesses," declares Yahweh,
"And My servant whom I have chosen,
So that you may know and believe Me
And understand that I am He.
Before Me there was no God formed,
And there will be none after Me.

43:11 "I, even I, am Yahweh,
And there is no savior besides Me.

43:12 "It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed,
And there was no strange god among you;
So you are My witnesses," declares Yahweh,
"And I am God.

43:13 "Even from eternity I am He (אֲנִי־אֵלֶּם),
And there is none who can deliver out of My hand;
I act and who can reverse it?"

In v. 1 of this chapter, Isaiah boldly states, "But now, thus says Yahweh, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!'" God is categorically declaring that the Jewish people belong to Him. He has not only created them (as He does every human being), but He has chosen them and "redeemed" them. This is to say that He has freed them from all their earthly problems, especially from the Gentile nations who have opposed, oppressed, and persecuted them over time. As a result, they need not be afraid of anyone. Ultimately, of course, this will happen only when the Messiah restores the Kingdom of Israel. So again, Isaiah and God seem to be speaking of the distant future, even though any Jew living at any time in history and has the opportunity to read or hear these words can take courage in the fact that God keeps His promises. And the one promise that should be near and dear to the hearts of the people of Israel is that He eventually will make them the most powerful nation in history. Thus, God always calls Israel by their "name," meaning that He always refers to them as His precious possessions according to the role which He has given them to instruct the rest of the world regarding Him and His truth.

God further explains why the Jews need not be afraid in vs. 2-4,

43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you.

43:3 "For I am Yahweh your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I have given Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in your place.

43:4 "Since you are precious in My sight,
Since you are honored and I love you,
I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life.

When the people of Israel "pass through the waters" and "through the rivers" and "through the fire" and "flame" metaphorically speaking, God will be "with" them (v. 2). They will not drown in the rivers or be burned by the fire and its flames. This means that they will not experience extinction at the end of this age when their enemies attack them, because God will keep His promise to their forefathers to preserve at least a remnant who will eventually rule the world. And God will do this because He is Yahweh and their God, the "Holy One of Israel." He is not the God of any other ethnic

group as His chosen people. No other nation in human history can claim to be the people of God or special to God, regardless of how many followers of Jesus the *Jewish* Messiah live within it.

He is also the Jewish people's "Savior" and champion, who rescues them from their earthly enemies (even from their mistreatment of each other). God will take their Gentile enemies in Egypt, Cush [Sudan/Ethiopia], Seba [southern Arabia], and by extrapolation all other locations in the Middle East and around the world and destroy them before they destroy the Jews. These other people will become a kind of "ransom" for the Jews, not exactly as their own Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, is their ransom. But as God says in v. 4, "Since you [Jews] are precious in My sight...I will give...other peoples in exchange for your life." The Jews have perennially and consistently rejected their own God, even in modern times claiming to be atheists, so that God could have rightly wiped them out completely if He chose (just as He came near to threatening to do in Exodus 32 and Numbers 16). However, instead of taking their lives, He will rightly end the lives of their enemies who are mistreating them when Jesus returns.

In addition, God states in vs. 5-6,

43:5 "Do not fear, for I am with you;
I will bring your offspring (אֶתְּיָדְךָ) from the east,
And gather you (אֶתְּיָדְךָ) from the west.
43:6 "I will say to the north, 'Give them up!'
And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'
Bring My sons from afar
And My daughters from the ends of the earth.

Once again, He assures the Jews that He is "with" them, guarding them and protecting them from their enemies, which will mean also at the end of the present age that He will gather them back into the land He has promised them in order to keep the oath which He swore to Abraham. Regardless of where these Jews live, even if they are at "the ends of the earth," God will make sure that they travel safely to Israel to comprise the "great nation" of Genesis 12:2 and to become the first generation of the millennial kingdom.

Then God addresses the Gentiles in vs. 8-9,

43:8 Bring out the people who are blind, even though they have eyes,
And the deaf, even though they have ears.
43:9 All the nations have gathered together
So that the peoples may be assembled.
Who among them can declare this
And proclaim to us the former things?
Let them present their witnesses that they may be justified,
Or let them hear and say, "It is true."

Combining these two verses, I think that "all the nations" are also "the people who are blind, even though they have eyes," and are the "deaf, even though they have ears." Certainly, this could be a description of the spiritual condition of the Jews down through the years, but it applies just as well to the Gentiles, indeed those who will oppose the Jews during the time before Jesus returns. In other words, antisemitism will only increase as the appearance of the Messiah approaches, and it is these antisemitic Gentiles whom God is addressing in these verses. Thus, "all the [spiritually blind and deaf] nations have gathered together" against Israel. And God challenges them to declare things that are true, so that He may judge whether or not they are right. But, of course, they are wrong because they reject not only God's chosen people, the Jews, but also God Himself. These Gentiles have filled their heads with lies and false ideas, and they express them as truth while also being incapable of discerning truth. They cannot tell the difference between an idea that is true and an idea that is false. And God appeals to them to put forth their wisest people as witnesses of their philosophies and

worldviews that they may attempt to justify themselves, their ideas, and their actions before God. The implied result is that they will fail miserably and incur God's judgment and condemnation.

And the difference between the above Gentiles and the Jews whom God is bringing back to the land of Israel is in vs. 10-13,

- 43:10 "You are My witnesses," declares Yahweh,
 "And My servant whom I have chosen,
 So that you may know and believe Me
 And understand that I am He.
 Before Me there was no God formed,
 And there will be none after Me.
- 43:11 "I, even I, am Yahweh,
 And there is no savior besides Me.
- 43:12 "It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed,
 And there was no strange god among you;
 So you are My witnesses," declares Yahweh,
 "And I am God.
- 43:13 "Even from eternity I am He,
 And there is none who can deliver out of My hand;
 I act and who can reverse it?"

The "You" of these verses are the Jews. They and not the presumptuous Gentiles are God's witnesses of the truth. Additionally, in this context, they and not the Messiah are God's servant. And He has chosen these physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for this purpose, i.e., so that they may know, believe, and understand who God is. They will grasp that only He is God as the source of all reality, and no one can usurp His place, power, or authority. No one existed before God, and it is not as though He will cease to be so that someone will replace Him afterwards. He also is Israel's only hope as a "savior" from their enemies. They cannot even save themselves, regardless of how powerful a military they form. God is "among" His people during this important time of keeping His promise to Abraham, so that the Jews are His "witnesses" to the rest of the world.

Finally, God declares in the last two of these verses, "I am God," and "even from eternity I am He." The phrase "from eternity" is literally "from the day" in Hebrew and "from the beginning" in the Greek Septuagint. It would seem that "from eternity" is the correct meaning in the sense that from whatever "day" a human being considers, God is from that time and even before that time the only God. In other words, there is no "time" when the one and only God did not exist. In fact, He existed before He created any "day" or time, because these have been around only since God started telling His story, starting with the different elements in Genesis 1.

And because God is the transcendent creator of everything else that exists, "there is none who can deliver out of [His] hand." He "acts and who can reverse it." If someone besides God is thinking, feeling, and making choices, then this is only because He is making this person a part of His story. And as we consider this, how much control over the author of a story does any character within it have? None at all. Indeed, it is obviously the other way around. The author has complete control over all the story's characters. And since each human being, angel, demon, and even Satan is an actor within God's story, then it stands to reason that not one of these can save anyone else from what God has determined will happen to him. And once God has caused someone to go through a situation in the story, then who has the power or ability to undo this experience? No one.

Therefore, God is making it clearer and clearer to the people of Israel that they need not fear their enemies, because He will fulfill His promise to free them from those who have or are mistreating them and, in the final analysis, He will reverse their roles and cause them to rule over their persecutors. In this way, God is constantly keeping the covenants which He made with Abraham, through Moses, and with David.

Isaiah 44:1-8

- 44:1 "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant,
And Israel, whom I have chosen:
- 44:2 Thus says Yahweh who made you
And formed you from the womb, who will help you,
'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant;
And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.
- 44:3 'For I will pour out water on the thirsty land
And streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring (אֶפְסֹךָ רוּחִי עַל-זַרְעֲךָ)
And My blessing on your descendants (וּבְרָכָתִי עַל-צִדְצִיּוֹתֶיךָ);
- 44:4 And they will spring up among the grass
Like poplars by streams of water.'
- 44:5 "This one will say, 'I am Yahweh's;
And that one will call on the name of Jacob;
And another will write on his hand, 'Belonging to Yahweh,'
And will name Israel's name with honor.
- 44:6 "Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts:
'I am the first and I am the last,
And there is no God besides Me.
- 44:7 'Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it;
Yes, let him recount it to Me in order,
From the time that I established the ancient nation (עַם-עוֹלָם).
And let them declare to them the things that are coming
And the events that are going to take place.
- 44:8 'Do not tremble and do not be afraid;
Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it?
And you are My witnesses.
Is there any God besides Me,
Or is there any other Rock?
I know of none."

Similar to the beginning of chapter 43, God says in vs. 1-2, "But now listen, O Jacob, My servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen: 2 thus says Yahweh who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; and you Jeshurun whom I have chosen." God is addressing the nation of Israel and calls them all His "servant." He has also "chosen" them to have a unique relationship with Him among all the peoples of the world. No other ethnic group can say that they are the chosen people of God. Each of the Jews God has "made" and "formed" from their mother's womb so that together they are a collection of human beings with whom God has a special and unique relationship. Plus, as a result of the promise which God made to Abraham in Genesis 12, the Jews need not fear their enemies, of whom that have had and continue to have many. This is because God will eventually cause them to live on the land which He has also promised them so that no one will ever harm them again.

Is God referring in these verses to something which has already happened? The future tenses in this English translation that closely matches the NAS95 would indicate not. But these verbs could be translated with the present tense as though God is bringing about the fulfillment of His promises to the nation of Israel and will continue to cause their situation to be exactly as He is describing it. There is no clue in the immediate context which allows us to conclude one way or the other. Therefore, let us assume that this passage is a general encouragement to all Jews at any time in history to look forward to what God is going to do for them at the end of the present age when the Messiah comes and establishes the Kingdom of God by ruling over them on the land of Israel.

By the way, in v. 2, the name “Jeshurun” probably is intended to contrast with their other name, “Israel” in v. 1. The former comes from the Hebrew word meaning “straight” while the latter means “the one who wrestles with God.” And this is also in the context of God’s referring to His chosen people by the name of Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, the father of twelve sons who are the heads the twelve tribes. And Jacob had deceived his father Esau so that he received his blessing instead of his older brother Esau. Thus, God connects the Jews to deception, wrestling with Him, and straightness. Indeed, they have demonstrated or will demonstrate all three in their relationship with God. They have sought to deceive Him with their idolatry. They have wrestled with Him during the difficult circumstances of their history. And they will collectively become morally straight during the millennial kingdom when, as sinners, they will acquire authentic faith and obedience through the inner work of the Spirit of God.

This last characteristic of biblical inwardness is exactly what God means in vs. 3-5. First, in v. 3, God says, “For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring (עַל-וֹרְטָנֶיךָ) and My blessing on your descendants (עַל-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל).” Because the land of Israel is such an integral part of God’s keeping His promise to Abraham and his descendants, He is probably referring in the first half of the verse to its actual dry ground, in spite of the parallelism with the verse’s next statements. Thus, God will bless the people with abundant water and resources to enjoy plentiful food and whatever they need to sustain their physical lives. In addition, He will bless the Jews by working within them and their hearts, thus causing them to become genuine believers in Him and His Messiah who will rule over them. Both the agricultural and spiritual attributes are elements of what it means for them to be a “great nation” according to God’s Abrahamic promise. We have here the first clue that God is addressing Jews who are Isaiah’s contemporaries because He speaks of their “offspring” (literally “seed” in Hebrew) and their “descendants” (literally “those who come from them”). It will be the people of Israel who live in the distant future who will experience the divine blessings of abundant food and changed hearts. However, God intends v. 3 to be an encouragement to all Jews from the time of Isaiah to the time of Jesus’ return. It will be as a result of the latter event that God will bless the Jews with both outward and inward resources. Then, the first generation of the millennial kingdom will also become the ancestors of many generations of authentically circumcised of heart Jews who exist after them until God brings this kingdom to a close when He desires.

God continues to describe these future, blessed descendants in vs. 4-5,

- 44:4 And they will spring up among the grass
Like poplars by streams of water.’
- 44:5 “This one will say, ‘I am Yahweh’s;
And that one will call on the name of Jacob;
And another will write on his hand, ‘Belonging to Yahweh,’
And will name Israel’s name with honor.”

Poplars are tall, fast-growing trees such as cottonwoods and aspens. The people of Israel will be like them, born healthy and strong during the millennial kingdom and growing numerous and great as God blesses them according to His long-held plans. One Jew will exclaim, “I belong to Yahweh.” Another will hearken to his ancestry and glory in his being able to trace his lineage back to Jacob, the father of the sons who were the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel. In parallel with these two ways of identifying themselves as Jews, another will write on his hand (metaphorically?), “Belonging to Yahweh,” while someone else will honor his heritage by referring to his cherished ancestor “Israel,” i.e., Jacob’s name after God changed it.

As further encouragement to His chosen people, God declares in v. 6, “Thus says Yahweh, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, Yahweh of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.’” He identifies Himself as the “King of Israel,” their ultimate ruler who, we know, supplies them with a human proxy and substitute, Jesus the Messiah. He will be their last and final

king after the series of kings beginning with David around 1000 B.C. God is also the Jews' "Redeemer." He frees them from the oppression and mistreatment by their enemies throughout history by granting them the greatness and ascendancy over their other nations which they will enjoy during the reestablished Kingdom of Israel when Jesus returns. And God is "Yahweh of hosts," their God whose name is Yahweh (meaning "He Is") and who leads His "hosts," the Hebrew word *tzeva'oth* (צְבָאוֹת), meaning armies. God will use every "military" instrument of His own, i.e., His own armies made up mainly of theophanies, to defeat the Jews' enemies and rescue them from their attacks and evil intentions. He is the best combination of a general and His armed forces that the people of Israel can have. And He will use all His strength and power to provide them with safety, security, and a prosperous existence on the land of Israel.

Thus, God goes on to ask in v. 7, "Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it. Yes, let him recount it to Me in order, from the time that I established the ancient nation (עַמֵּי עוֹלָם). And let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to take place." Here God is challenging anyone who exists within His creation, especially any human being, to stand up and tell Him all that comprises human history. And God is referring specifically to the history of "the ancient nation," literally "the people of 'olam," the people who will last for as long as God has decreed. And who are these people in this context? The Jews, the nation of Israel, to whom He has made a promise that they will endure until the end of the present realm and will eventually become the most powerful nation in the world, ruled by their Messiah and final Davidic king. God wants to know from anyone who dares to think that he understands exactly how God is going to accomplish His purposes with respect to the Jews. The obvious answer to the question, "Who is like Me"? is, "No one." God is eternal. God has had no beginning and will have no end. God is uncreated and therefore ontologically outside the creation. It and we are products of His imagination so that, as the apostle Paul tells the philosophically minded men of Mars Hill in Acts 17:28, "In Him we live and move and have our being."

Therefore, in v. 8 God finishes His words of encouragement to the Jews, "Do not tremble and do not be afraid; have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none." Whether God is addressing Jews in Isaiah's day, or Jews from the time of Isaiah to the millennial kingdom, or Jews just before He brings this last and final kingdom in existence when Jesus returns, He assures them that they need not fear their enemies. And the reason is, because for at least thirteen hundred years God has been stating that what He has promised, to form the most powerful nation from the Jewish people, He will do. And the Jews are His "witnesses." They have seen God work in their ancestors' lives in such a way that clearly demonstrates that God remains constantly faithful and loyal to them. For example, He rescued them from slavery in Egypt, making the Mosaic Covenant with them and five hundred years later a covenant with David to the effect that his descendants would provide royal leadership for them Jews. As a result, the nation of Israel have a "Rock" on which they can stand firmly, safely, and permanently. And it is their God who is committed to them and to no other ethnic group on earth. His words, His promises, His pledges to them alone have a solid existence which no other being can destroy. God Himself stands by everything which He has said to the Jews, starting with Abraham, continuing with Moses, and ending with David and one of His descendants, the "Servant" of God in Isaiah 42 whom God will appoint as a new covenant to His people (cf. Isaiah 42:6).

Isaiah 45:14-25

45:14 Thus says Yahweh,
 "The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush
 And the Sabceans, men of stature,
 Will come over to you and will be yours;
 They will walk behind you. They will come over in chains
 And will bow down to you;

They will make supplication to you:
 'Surely, God is with you, and there is none else,
 No other God.'

- 45:15 Truly, You are a God who hides Himself,
 O God of Israel, Savior!
- 45:16 They will be put to shame and even humiliated, all of them;
 The manufacturers of idols will go away together in humiliation.
- 45:17 Israel has been saved by Yahweh
 With an everlasting salvation (תְּשׁוּעַת עוֹלָמִים);
 You will not be put to shame or humiliated
 To all eternity (עַד-עוֹלָמֵי עַד).
- 45:18 For thus says Yahweh, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it. He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited),
 "I am Yahweh, and there is none else.
- 45:19 "I have not spoken in secret,
 In some dark land;
 I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,
 'Seek Me in a waste place';
 I, Yahweh, speak righteousness,
- 45:20 "Gather yourselves and come (הִקְבְּצוּ וְבֹאוּ);
 Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations (פְּלִיטֵי הַגּוֹיִם);
 They have no knowledge,
 Who carry about their wooden idol
 And pray to a god who cannot save.
- 45:21 "Declare and set forth your case;
 Indeed, let them consult together.
 Who has announced this from of old?
 Who has long since declared it?
 Is it not I, Yahweh?
 And there is no other God besides Me,
 A righteous God and a Savior;
 There is none except Me.
- 45:22 "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth (כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אֲרֶזֶן);
 For I am God, and there is no other.
- 45:23 "I have sworn by Myself,
 The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness
 And will not turn back,
 That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.
- 45:24 "They will say of Me, 'Only in Yahweh are righteousness and strength.'
 Men will come to Him,
 And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame.
- 45:25 "In Yahweh all the offspring of Israel (כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל)
 Will be justified and will glory (יִצְדְּקוּ וְיִתְהַלְלוּ)."

I have not listed vs. 1-13, but chapter 45 begins with God's speaking to Cyrus, the future king of Persia, who will defeat the Babylonians in 539 B.C. and issue a decree permitting the exiled Jews in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the temple. In fact, he will be God's "Anointed," His Messiah because of his special role in freeing the Jews from their former enemies and sending back to their land. It is clear that Cyrus remains the object of God's words through v. 7. Thus, two hundred years or so before Cyrus exists, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah to predict exactly what he will do for His chosen people, the nation of Israel. And the inference which everyone should immediately draw is in the last half of v. 6 and completed in v.7, which I quote below,

45:6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun

That there is no one besides Me.

I am Yahweh, and there is no other,

45:7 The One forming light (יִצְרֵר אֹר) and creating darkness (וַיְבַרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ),
 Causing well-being (עֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם) and creating calamity (וַיְבַרֵא רָע);
 I am Yahweh who does all these (אֲנִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל-אֵלֶּה).

Verse 7 is especially difficult for us to wrap our minds around. But God is saying that it is ultimately He who “does/makes *shalom*” to occur in people’s lives. And it is ultimately He who “creates evil [the basic meaning of the Hebrew word *ra’* (רָע)],” which results in calamity, harm, and suffering in their lives, too. In other words, God is the sovereign ruler over the entire creation, including the willful choices of sinful human beings. As the rest of the Bible bears out, God is telling a story which features Jesus of Nazareth as the Savior and King of a certain kind of people, whether Jews or Gentiles, who genuinely repent and choose to believe in God. Therefore, each of us is a character in God’s story, and He is going to tell it exactly as He has planned from before the beginning of the creation. God formulated the entire story, which will stretch into eternity, before He brought the creation into existence, and He has been, is, and will be telling it precisely as He chooses.

In vs. 8-10 God continues making comments about His majesty and sovereignty, and in v. 11 He refers to “My sons,” by which I think He means the Israelites. But He returns to addressing Cyrus at the end of v. 11 and through v. 13. It will be the Persian king who will build God’s city by letting His exiles go free from Babylon. And they will not even have to pay any ransom.

The question then becomes for us as we look at vs. 14-25 above, is God still speaking to and of Cyrus in v. 14? Is he the “you” (singular and not plural, interestingly enough) of this verse? Or is God referring to the nation of “Israel” as a unit? He mentioned in v. 11 that He is “his [singular!] Maker,” and “Israel” is in parallel with “My sons” (obviously plural) in the same verse. I think that the correct interpretation is the second option. Even though God cites Cyrus as the one who initiates the return of the Jews to their land to rebuild God’s city, Jerusalem, it will make more sense in v. 14 to interpret Him as talking to the Jews in the light of the rest of the verse. But again, which Jews are in view here? Those who are Isaiah’s contemporaries? Those who will return to the land of Israel from Babylon in 539 B.C.? Or those at some other time in their history, even at the beginning of the millennial kingdom when God makes them a “great nation?” I think that it is the last option. Let us consider the clues.

Verse 14 says,

45:14 “Thus says Yahweh,
 “The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush
 And the Sabeans, men of stature,
 Will come over to you and will be yours;
 They will walk behind you. They will come over in chains
 And will bow down to you;
 They will make supplication to you:
 ‘Surely, God is with you, and there is none else,
 No other God.’”

It is certainly possible that, as a result of Cyrus’ expansion of the Persian Empire in the 6th century B.C., the Egyptians, people of Cush (Sudan/Ethiopia), and the Sabeans came as slaves to the Jews in Jerusalem, bowed down in homage before them, and asked for their help and prayers by acknowledging that their God, the one true God, was their savior, protector, and provider. But this also sounds like the time when Jesus returns and destroys Israel’s enemies, so that people from the Gentile nations, as represented by these three groups of people in v. 14, are willing to enslave themselves to the Jews on the land which God has given them in order to come under His and their protection. Indeed, these Gentiles will become changed of heart like the Jews, and they will be

authentic believers in Yahweh and Jesus the Messiah, declaring that God has a special and unique relationship with the people of Israel which results in His protection and providence. They will also bring their possessions with them as offerings to not only God, but also to the Jews. They will give up everything to acquire a place in the Kingdom of God, which will be the Kingdom of Israel at this time.

Then, in v. 15 somebody, probably Isaiah, declares, “Truly, You are a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, Savior!” The speaker seems to be contrasting God with the idols of the pagan gods of the aforementioned Gentiles. These people “will be put to shame and even humiliated, all of them; the manufacturers of idols will go away together in humiliation” (v. 16). It is as though unbelievers have an ungodly need to see their god or gods by making representations of them. They visualize the forces of nature such as the sun, the moon, storms, etc. and make them visible on earth by means of their idols. But the God of Israel is completely invisible, unless of course He manifests Himself through a theophany as He did to Moses in the burning bush (cf. Exodus 3). However, theophanies are God’s representing Himself, not man’s doing so with an idol like the Gentiles. And even when He appears within the creation, it is vital that we human beings remember that He transcends the creation and is the very source of our existence. Thus, He “hides Himself” as the “Savior” and champion of Israel, rescuing them from their enemies, so that the latter people “will be put to shame and even humiliated.” As the apostle Paul points out in Romans 1, simply by observing the creation, we should automatically deduce that there is a God beyond the creation who is so powerful and good that we have great trouble grasping with our finite minds exactly what He is like. To ignore this truth and consider the forces of nature, e.g., “evolution,” as the primary origin of life is to be guilty of idolatry.

Isaiah goes on in v. 17, “Israel has been saved by Yahweh with an everlasting salvation. You will not be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity.” In this context, the “salvation” of Israel is their being freed from persecution, oppression, and harm from their enemies. And Isaiah says that Yahweh has saved them in this way “with an everlasting salvation.” He uses the same word as we have seen before, *‘olam*, but now it is plural, *‘olameem* (עוֹלָמִים), for emphasis. Similarly, he repeats this idea in the second part of the verse, that in contrast to the Gentiles who worship false gods, the Jews “will not be put to shame or humiliated for all eternity.” The last three words are a translation of the phrase *‘ad ‘olamay* ‘ad (עַד-עוֹלָמֵי עַד). We have considered the very similar phrase *‘ad ‘olam* in previous passages. Here, as in the first part of the verse, Isaiah is emphasizing the longevity of God’s salvation for the nation of Israel by saying literally “to the perpetuities of the to.” This phrase sounds weird to our ears, but for the Hebrews, it means for as long as God wants their salvation to exist, which is the same meaning for *‘olameem* in the first line of the verse. Therefore, Isaiah must be speaking of God’s making the Jews’ a nation not only free from their enemies, but also greater than their enemies. This is the “great nation” of His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. So once again, the prophet and God are looking into the far distant future to what God will ultimately do for His chosen people.

And what should the Gentiles do at this same time as God is keeping His promise to Abraham? Isaiah exhorts them in v. 20, “Gather yourselves and come; draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; they have no knowledge, who carry about their wooden idol and pray to a god who cannot save.” We will come back to this, but first in vs. 18-19 Isaiah presents another long statement by God that affirms His uniqueness,

45:18 For thus says Yahweh, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it. He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited),

“I am Yahweh, and there is none else.

45:19 “I have not spoken in secret,

In some dark land;

I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,

‘Seek Me in a waste place’;

I, Yahweh, speak righteousness,

Declaring things that are upright.”

First, the entire universe, “the heavens” and “the earth,” exist by virtue of God’s direct causation. He has “created” and “formed” them. He also “established” the earth as a place “to be inhabited” by human beings, who are characters in His story that, in regard to the present earth, will culminate in the final Kingdom of Israel. And God declares for all to hear that He is Yahweh, and there is no other creator of the things which exist within this creation. In addition, He has been very clear and intimate in His messages to Abraham and his descendants, “the offspring [descendants] of Jacob,” the twelve tribes of Israel. They have not had to travel to some remote area in order to hear what God has to say to them. Instead, He has spoken directly to them through their forefathers, starting with Abraham, and then continuing with the prophets such as Isaiah. And everything which He has said is true and right according to His own moral righteousness and perfection. Nothing could be clearer to His chosen people than His support of them. He is committed to them, and He will guard and fulfill His promises to them.

And when God does make them a “great nation,” what should the Gentiles do? Now we come back to v. 20. Those who are still alive and have not been destroyed by Jesus and God’s armies who come to rescue the Jews from their enemies, who are the “fugitives” and survivors of the nations, should gather themselves and come and draw near to God and the Jews. They should recognize that by rejecting God and worshiping elements within the creation, even ascribing to themselves greatness and power which clearly can come from only God who grants it to them for His purposes, they are fools. The creation will not be able to rescue them from God’s condemnation, and they will not be able to rescue themselves.

Then God presents a challenge to the unbelieving Gentiles in v. 21,

45:21 “Declare and set forth your case;
Indeed, let them consult together.
Who has announced this from of old?
Who has long since declared it?
Is it not I, Yahweh?
And there is no other God besides Me,
A righteous God and a Savior;
There is none except Me.”

The flow of this and the previous and next verses points to the pagan (unbelieving) Gentiles as the audience. The implied idea is that sinful human beings love to think that they can argue their way out of God’s judgment. Here, God even encourages them to consult with one another about what they should say to Him, how they can best defend themselves before their transcendent and morally perfect creator, when they themselves know that they are sinful and rebellious, deserving His wrath, condemnation, and the punishment of eternal destruction. So God urges them to speak up and “set forth [their] case.” He will be glad to listen to their foolish thoughts and ideas. Indeed, He wants to them to state what HE has “announced...from old.” And what is the “this” that He has “long since declared?” I think it is His commitment to Israel. God wants the Gentiles to give Him one good reason why He should not remain constant in His faithfulness to the Jews and why He should not destroy those who have persecuted and mistreated them. Again, it is implied that definitely the people of Israel have not obeyed God as He has required according to the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, they too deserve His condemnation. However, God has promised, guaranteed, and sworn to Abraham that his descendants will become a “great nation,” and nothing, not even the Jews’ own rebellion against Him, will stop Him from keeping this promise. As we have seen, this is because of God’s *hesed*.

Thus, in this same verse, God affirms that He is the only God, who is also “righteous” and a “Savior.” In this context, He is especially Israel’s savior from those who oppose them on earth, and He also is the Gentiles’ savior from His eternal condemnation. This is what He goes on to say in v. 22, “Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.” God calls

upon all the nations, those even at “the ends of the earth,” to do the same thing that the Jews are required to do. They must “turn” to Him. And if they do, they will “be saved.” From what? The rightful punishment of their rebellion against Him, the punishment that ultimately is eternal even if it were to begin in the case of those who attack Israel by their physical death when the Messiah returns. But these to whom God is addressing Himself are “fugitives” and survivors after Jesus defends Israel. So even though they are still guilty of unbelief and opposing the people of God, they probably did not participate in the direct assault on them. As a result, God appeals to them to repent in order to escape His eternal condemnation, which they deserve and will incur if they do not appeal to Him for His mercy and forgiveness.

Indeed, there will be an extremely significant event as God states in v. 23, “I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.” Does God mean that every Gentile will become a person of authentic faith, or that every human being at the judgment will finally acknowledge that God is the sovereign creator (even if they do so grudgingly and still with a heart of rebellion), or something else? I suggest that it is something else. Notice what God says in v. 24 and then what Isaiah states as an editorial comment in v. 25,

45:24 “They will say of Me, ‘Only in Yahweh are righteousness and strength.’
Men will come to Him,
And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame.”
45:25 In Yahweh all the offspring of Israel
Will be justified and will glory.

I think that the “they” in v. 24 are the same as those who comprise “every knee” which will bow before God and worship Him. And they are the same as “all the offspring [descendants] of Israel” who “will be justified and will glory.” In other words, they are every living Jew who survives God’s final judgments and disciplinary actions towards them in the days immediately prior to Jesus’ return. These are the Jews who will become the first generation in the millennial kingdom, who all are authentic believers in Yahweh and Jesus as their Messiah. They will acquire justification by their faith, a relationship with God whereby they stand to obtain not only participation in the restored Kingdom of Israel as mortal beings, but also, after they die, entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God as immortal beings on the new earth. Thus, they will “glory,” which is the word from which we get Hallelujah. They will praise God for His mercy and salvation. And this will continue for all the Jews who live generation after generation under Jesus’ rule and leadership as their king because God has kept His promises as revealed in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants.

Isaiah 49

49:1 Listen to Me, O islands,
And pay attention, you peoples from afar.
Yahweh called Me from the womb;
From the body of My mother He named Me.
49:2 He has made My mouth like a sharp sword,
In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me;
And He has also made Me a select arrow,
He has hidden Me in His quiver.
49:3 He said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel,
In Whom I will show My glory.”
49:4 But I said, “I have toiled in vain,
I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity;
Yet surely the justice due to Me is with Yahweh,
And My reward with My God.”
49:5 And now says Yahweh, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant,

- To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered (יִאָסְפוּ) to Him
 (For I am honored in the sight of Yahweh,
 And My God is My strength),
- 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
 To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
 I will also make You a light of the nations (וְנִתְתִּיךָ לְאֹרֶךְ גּוֹיִם)
 So that My salvation (יִשׁוּעָתִי) may reach to the end of the earth (עַד־קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ)."
- 49:7 Thus says Yahweh, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One,
 To the despised One,
 To the One abhorred by the nation (בְּמִתְעֵב גּוֹיִם),
 To the Servant of rulers,
 "Kings will see and arise,
 Princes will also bow down,
 Because of Yahweh who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You."
- 49:8 Thus says Yahweh,
 "In a favorable time I have answered You,
 And in a day of salvation I have helped You;
 And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,
 To restore the land (לְהִקְיֵם אֶרֶץ), to make them inherit the desolate heritages;
- 49:9 Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,'
 To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.'
 Along the roads they will feed,
 And their pasture will be on all bare heights.
- 49:10 "They will not hunger or thirst,
 Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down;
 For He who has compassion on them will lead them
 And will guide them to springs of water.
- 49:11 "I will make all My mountains a road,
 And My highways will be raised up.
- 49:12 "Behold, these will come from afar;
 And lo, these will come from the north and from the west,
 And these from the land of Sinim."
- 49:13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth!
 Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains!
 For Yahweh has comforted His people
 And will have compassion on His afflicted.
- 49:14 But Zion said, "Yahweh has forsaken me,
 And Yahweh has forgotten me."
- 49:15 "Can a woman forget her nursing child
 And have no compassion on the son of her womb?
 Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.
- 49:16 "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
 Your walls are continually before Me.
- 49:17 "Your builders hurry;
 Your destroyers and devastators
 Will depart from you.
- 49:18 "Lift up your eyes and look around;
 All of them gather together, they come to you.
 As I live," declares Yahweh,
 "You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.
- 49:19 "For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land —
 Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants,
 And those who swallowed you will be far away.
- 49:20 "The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears,
 'The place is too cramped for me;

- Make room for me that I may live here.’
- 49:21 “Then you will say in your heart,
 ‘Who has begotten these for me,
 Since I have been bereaved of my children
 And am barren, an exile and a wanderer?
 And who has reared these?
 Behold, I was left alone;
 From where did these come?’”
- 49:22 Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
 “Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations
 And set up My standard to the peoples;
 And they will bring your sons in their bosom,
 And your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.
- 49:23 “Kings will be your guardians,
 And their princesses your nurses.
 They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth
 And lick the dust of your feet;
 And you will know that I am Yahweh;
 Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.
- 49:24 “Can the prey be taken from the mighty man,
 Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”
- 49:25 Surely, thus says Yahweh,
 “Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away,
 And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued;
 For I will contend with the one who contends with you,
 And I will save your sons.
- 49:26 “I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh,
 And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine;
 And all flesh will know that I, Yahweh, am your Savior
 And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

The remarkable nature of these passages in Isaiah continues as God affirms His commitment to the Jews and directly or indirectly rebukes the Gentiles for oppressing and mistreating them. But first, someone speaks to the Gentiles. It may not be obvious at first who this person is, but it should become clear as we consider each verse. The speaker begins in v. 1, “Listen to Me, O islands, and pay attention, you peoples from afar. Yahweh called Me from the womb; from the body of My mother He named Me.” His audience are “islands” and “peoples from afar,” which could be dispersed Jews after the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., but more likely are Gentiles at an even future time. And he identifies himself as one whom Yahweh has “called...from the womb,” so that He named him “from the body” of his mother. Could this refer to the same dynamic that Luke records in his gospel of the angel Gabriel coming to Mary, announcing to her that God miraculously is going to cause her to have a son, and that she should name him Jesus? And to name a person is to establish his role in human history. Therefore, this person has a special part to play in God’s story, and while certainly the people of Israel naturally should pay attention to who he is, because the following verses will indicate that he is Jewish, the Gentiles also should recognize who he is and respond accordingly. His existence affects them, too, in a significant way.

The speaker goes on in v. 2 to describe himself, “He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; and He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver.” Swords and arrows are offensive weapons used to fight enemies or to kill animals for food. My guess is that the first option fits here. Thus, this special chosen one of God will speak about Him in such a way that if people do not embrace his words, they will incur God’s destructive judgment. He has also been “concealed” and “hidden” by God for a period of time, that is, until He has been willing to reveal him to the world and use him for His special purposes.

Then, v. 3, “He said to Me, ‘You are My Servant, Israel, in whom I will show My glory.’” As in chapter 42, we have here the mention of a “Servant” of God. And in this case his name is “Israel.” Does this mean that he is the entire nation, all the Jews? Or is this an individual whose name here is the same as both Jacob, the patriarch of the twelve tribes, and the entire group of people who also took on his name? I think that it is an individual, in whom and through whom God reveals His “glory,” which is His magnificence as not only the only God in existence, but also the one who initially and continuously declares His commitment to the Jews to make them a “great nation.” Consequently, this Servant will be instrumental, even central, to God’s keeping His promise to this ethnic group, Israel, who are His chosen people among all the other ethnic groups on the earth and throughout history.

However, the Servant has a complaint in v. 4, “But I said, ‘I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely the justice due to Me is with Yahweh, and My reward with My God.’” This Servant has worked hard to have an effect that fits with his abilities and the quality of his actions. However, instead of success, he has met with failure. He has “toiled in vain.” He has “spent [his] strength for nothing and vanity.” Nevertheless, he knows that all is not lost. Indeed his “justice,” i.e., what he deserves for his obedience to God, is “with God.” Likewise is his “reward.” God will pay him what He owes him for his work and obedience. Even though it appears at first that he is a complete failure, God will prove and demonstrate that he is an astounding and incomparable success.

We learn in v. 5 of one successful element that this Servant will experience, “And now says Yahweh, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (for I am honored in the sight of Yahweh, and My God is My strength).” He starts by saying that God is “now” speaking to him—in the midst of his apparent failure. And he reveals what is probably God’s primary purpose for him, “to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him.” God has literally “formed” this person “from the womb.” He has made him a regular human being. And his purpose in life is to draw the people of Israel, the Jews, back to their God so that they gather together to worship Him. I think that this means that the Jews will eventually all become authentic in their belief and obedience on account of and on the basis of this servant. Perhaps, they place their faith and belief in him as well as in Yahweh. This seems reasonable in the light of his saying that he is “honored in the sight of Yahweh.” For the Jews to recognize this Servant’s importance and role is tantamount to their belief in Yahweh. They cannot do one without doing the other.

But this is not the only purpose that God has for His Servant as v. 6 confirms, “He says, ‘It is too small a thing that you should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’” To restore the unrepentant and unbelieving Jewish nation to their God is certainly a great thing. But what if this Servant also draws the rest of the people in the world, the Gentiles, to God? What if he becomes the center of attention among both the Jews and the Gentiles in their relationship with God? By doing so, this person enlightens the Gentiles and reveals God’s truth of His purposes and His moral commandments to them. And the result is that God rescues these Gentiles from His judgment and condemnation in the same manner that He rescues the Jews. With this Servant, God’s mercy and forgiveness extend to the far reaches of the earth, beyond the boundaries of the land of Israel.

But how is it that the Servant appears to fail in his mission for God? We find out in v. 7, “Thus says Yahweh, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, to the despised one, to the one abhorred by the nation, to the Servant of rulers, ‘Kings will see and arise, princes will also bow down, because of Yahweh who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen you.’” Instead of being able to convince the very people to whom God has sent him that they should embrace him as their leader, he becomes “the despised one” and “the one abhorred by the nation.” He fails to obtain the people’s allegiance, and they reject him. And in the context, they are “the tribes of Jacob,” the Jews. Nevertheless, Isaiah identifies Yahweh as “the Redeemer of Israel.” He will free His chosen people

from their enemies. He is also Israel's "Holy One," the God of all gods, the one God who is separate from all the others, because He is the only true God. And He says to the man who is "the Servant of rulers," that "Kings will see and arise, princes will also bow down." So this will take place in spite of Israel's rejecting him and most likely after they do so. Plus, it will happen "because Yahweh is faithful" to all His promises to Abraham and David to make Israel the most powerful nation and their leader, the Davidic king, the most powerful ruler in the world. All other leaders of nations will submit to God's "Servant," so that he dictates what laws they and their citizens adopt and follow.

Isaiah adds more details in vs. 8-12 of how all this will happen. First, vs. 8-9 say,

49:8 Thus says Yahweh,

"In a favorable time I have answered You,
And in a day of salvation I have helped You;
And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,
To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages;

49:9 Saying to those who are bound, 'Go forth,'

To those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.'
Along the roads they will feed,
And their pasture will be on all bare heights."

God has heard the Servant's prayer for help and assistance in saving the Jewish people. And He has and will "keep," i.e., guard, him and protect him so that He may "give" him "for a covenant of the people." God will use this person to make a new covenant with His chosen people for a specific purpose—"to restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages." This servant becomes the very instrument by which God gives the land of Israel, which has been made desolate by their enemies, to the nation of Israel. The implied idea is that He will then transform the "desolate" places into productive and fruitful cities and fields.

Yahweh will also speak to the "bound" and oppressed, who have feared for their lives and hidden themselves from their enemies, to come out of hiding and "Go forth." During this time, they will find food and sustenance on the entire land, "the roads" and "all the bare heights."

Indeed, as God says in v. 10,

49:10 "They will not hunger or thirst,

Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down;
For He who has compassion on them will lead them
And will guide them to springs of water."²

The Jews living on the land of Israel will experience only God's "compassion," and He will lead them by means of the "light" of truth which His Servant will teach them. As a result, "they will not hunger or thirst," because God will always provide them with adequate food and water (cf. Isaiah 35:8; 40:3-4; 42:16; 43:5-7). And, by implication, they will always have plenty of truth to ingest from God's Servant, so that they are continuously wise and discerning in how they live their lives.

God will even change the topography of the land to make it easy to traverse for all those Jews who are traveling from around the world and back to land which God has promised them. This He says in vs. 11-12,

49:11 "I will make all My mountains a road,
And My highways will be raised up.

49:12 "Behold, these will come from afar;
And lo, these will come from the north and from the west,

² Revelation 7:16 "They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

And these from the land of Sinim.”

God will eliminate any impediment that the Jews might encounter in their return to the land of Israel. “Mountains” that appear insurmountable will become a simple “road.” The same will be true of “highways” that may have sunk to the point that they are unusable. As result, God’s people, the nation of Israel, “will come from afar,” ...“from the north and from the west,” even “from the land of Sinim.” Genesis 10:17 mentions the Sinites as the part of the generation after Canaan, the son of Ham, Noah’s son. The use of the word here probably is intended as hyperbole. It does not matter where the Jews reside on the whole earth. God intends to bring them back to their land, and He will accomplish this purpose. Nothing and no one will stop Him.

Next, in v. 13, the prophet exhorts the creation, “Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For Yahweh has comforted His people and will have compassion on His afflicted.” Isaiah declares that God is very much committed to the Jews, who are “His people.” Indeed, He “has comforted” them, and He expresses “compassion” towards them in the midst of and because of their being persecuted and mistreated by their enemies. We recall that in Isaiah 40:1, God says, “Comfort, O comfort My people.” The same Hebrew word for “comfort,” *naḥam* (נָחַם), is used here in chapter 49. Again, these ideas point to the three covenants which God has already made with Abraham’s descendants—the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants. And they also point to the upcoming new covenant through the Servant as mentioned 49:8 and was already referred to in 42:6.

However, God is aware that the Jews whom He is addressing, along with the Servant, do not feel as though He is being loyal to them. Thus, He says in v. 14, “But Zion said, ‘Yahweh has forsaken me, and Yahweh has forgotten me.’” These Jews could be living at the time of Isaiah, or shortly thereafter when the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem, or immediately before Jesus’ return when the Beast of Revelation invades their land, intent on wiping them out. It seems that this last option fits the context best, and the people on the land of Israel (along with the Jews around the world) are suffering to such a degree that it is difficult for them to believe that God has promised to make them a “great nation.”

But God answers them in vs. 15-16,

49:15 “Can a woman forget her nursing child
And have no compassion on the son of her womb?
Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.
49:16 “Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
Your walls are continually before Me.”

Just as a loving mother would never think of abandoning her children, especially when they are young and small and so dependent on her for all their needs and survival, so also God will “not forget” the Jews. In fact, as it unfortunately sometimes happens and mothers ignore or reject their children, the most terrible example being when they murder the unborn and abort their tiny lives, God will never act like this towards His chosen people, the ethnic group of Israel. He may judge them and discipline them with great suffering as in the case of the Assyrian invasion in 722 B.C., the Babylonian invasion in 605-586 B.C., the Roman destructions of A.D. 70 and 132-135, etc. But He remains constant and committed to them in spite of their rejecting Him. God says in v. 16 that it as though He has written (tattooed!) their name on the palms of His hands, so that every time He looks at them, He is reminded of His promise to Abraham to preserve them and make them great. In parallel with this idea, God refers to their “walls,” probably of Jerusalem, even if they have been torn down, that He will one day ensure that they exist and are never again breached by their enemies.

Thus, He goes on to say in v. 17 regarding the walls, “Your builders hurry; your destroyers and devastators will depart from you.” This could refer to the people who returned from the Babylonian captivity in the mid-6th century B.C. and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem under the leadership of

Nehemiah. But it makes more sense in the context of Isaiah 49 to interpret this verse as referring to the time just before the return of Jesus. Therefore, under Jesus' leadership, the Jews will "hurry" and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and their enemies, the "destroyers and devastators" who had invaded the land "will depart" forever, never to harass or harm the nation of Israel again.

God continues in vs. 18-21, which we should examine as a unit,

- 49:18 "Lift up your eyes and look around;
All of them gather together, they come to you.
As I live," declares Yahweh,
"You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.
- 49:19 "For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land —
Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants,
And those who swallowed you will be far away.
- 49:20 "The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears,
'The place is too cramped for me;
Make room for me that I may live here.'
- 49:21 "Then you will say in your heart,
'Who has begotten these for me,
Since I have been bereaved of my children
And am barren, an exile and a wanderer?
And who has reared these?
Behold, I was left alone;
From where did these come?'"

I think that God is still speaking. In v. 18, He encourages the Jews on the land of Israel to look around them. What do they see? "All of them gather together, they come to you." Who are these people coming to the Jews? A clue is in v. 19. There are so many that "surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants." This sounds as though they are fellow Jews who are returning to their land and who will make up the "great nation" of the millennial kingdom after Jesus returns. These are "the children of whom [the Jews] were bereaved" (v. 20). We can think of all the Jews who have died from oppression and persecution by their enemies throughout their history, and for whom the survivors wept and grieved over their loss. But now many, many Jews from around the world are returning to the land and, in a sense, making up for the loss of all those others who died in past years. And God says of the Jews who are watching them immigrate into the land, "Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, since I have been bereaved of my children and am barren, an exile and a wanderer? And who has reared these? Behold, I was left alone; from where did these come?'" The Jews currently living on the land will consider their history and feel as though they are small in number in comparison to what could have been. If only they had not lost so many of their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and others, in catastrophes such as the Holocaust of the World War II and the pogroms of the Soviet Union. In addition, and perhaps because their nearby enemies continuously threaten and harass them, they will still feel like exiles and wanderers who are having trouble completely settling on the land. But when Jesus returns, destroys their enemies, governs the world with absolute authority, and they see their population increase daily as their fellow Jews return from around the globe, it will be as though they are giving birth to new children miraculously so that they wonder how could this even happen.

God's answer to their wonderment starts in vs. 22-23,

- 49:22 Thus says Adonai Yahweh,
"Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations
And set up My standard to the peoples;
And they will bring your sons in their bosom,
And your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.
- 49:23 "Kings will be your guardians,

And their princesses your nurses.
 They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth
 And lick the dust of your feet;
 And you will know that I am Yahweh;
 Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.”

Basically, the answer to the Jews’ question, “How can all of a sudden all these people return to the land of Israel?” is, God!! He will literally cause the Gentiles to provide whatever the foreign Jews need to travel back to Israel. No one will stop them. No one will threaten them. No one will hinder them from making the trip from wherever these Jews live in the rest of the Gentile world. Indeed, the Gentiles’ assistance will be like carrying the Jews “in their bosom” and “on their shoulders.” Plus, the political leaders will make sure they have all that they need to sustain them during their trips to Israel. As God says, “Kings will be your guardians, and their princesses your nurses.” And this will be the case most likely because the Messiah will be ruling the world with a rod of iron. Everyone, whether believer or unbeliever, will acknowledge his authority and that of the people of Israel, who will be ruling with him. Thus, the nations “will bow down to you [Jews] with their faces to the earth and lick the dust of your feet,” because they will finally treat the people of Israel with the deference and respect that the chosen people of God deserve. And many of the Gentiles will look to the Jews for instruction and teaching about God for the sake of their own faith. The result will be, as God goes on to say, “You [Jews] will know that I am Yahweh.” It will be obvious to all the Jews that God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation.” In other words, part of the definition of this phrase is that the Gentile nations will themselves look upon the Jews as a great people, who are exercising ascendancy over them and should be respected for their special relationship with God and for their wisdom, as Deuteronomy 4 says.

Furthermore, “Those who hopefully wait for [God] will not be put to shame.” The word “hopefully” is a little confusing, and a better way to translate the last two lines of v. 23 is, “You [Jews] will know that I am Yahweh, which means that you who wait for Me will not be put to shame.” God is identifying the condition that the Jews will fulfill in order to participate in this wonderful event of returning to and living on the land which He has promised them. They will be people who “wait for” Him. This is to say that they believe in Him and trust Him as the God who keeps His promises. As a result, they will “not be put to shame” for their unbelief and suffer harm from their enemies. For God will save them from their enemies so that they become the first generation of the restored Kingdom of Israel when the Messiah appears.

And how certain can the Jews be that all this will happen as God is describing in these verses? He says in vs. 24-25,

49:24 “Can the prey be taken from the mighty man,
 Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”
 49:25 Surely, thus says Yahweh,
 “Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away,
 And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued;
 For I will contend with the one who contends with you,
 And I will save your sons.”

The situation for the Jews before the Messiah comes back on the scene to restore the Kingdom of Israel will seem hopeless. Their enemies will gain such earthly power and authority that it will appear as though they will wipe them out. The people of Israel will be like “prey” that cannot “be taken from the mighty man” and as “captives” who cannot “be rescued” from the tyrant who is oppressing them. But “thus says Yahweh,” no “mighty man” and no “tyrant” will have the power, strength, or ability to keep the Jews as “captives” and treat them like “prey”—because God will “contend with the one who contends with” them, and He “will save” them and their families from extinction. He will do this, and

they can be assured of it because He is their God, the one and only God, who transcends the creation and is telling its story exactly as He wants.

In fact, things will become so bad for Israel's enemies that, as God says, "I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, and they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine" (v. 26). Does He mean that He will make the situation so untenable for those who oppose the Jews that they will resort to cannibalism? Very likely. Thus, God will protect His people and usher them into the restored Kingdom of Israel, so that they never have to fear anyone again who might want to kill them, harm them, or persecute them. The bottom line is that God will destroy Israel's antagonists and rescue the Jews from harm's way for the rest of their existence in the present realm while He fulfills His promise to Abraham to make his descendants through Isaac and Jacob the most powerful nation in the world with their Messiah, Jesus, ruling over them and the entire earth.

God ends the last part of v. 26, "And all flesh will know that I, Yahweh, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." Not only will the Jews understand God and His majesty, but so also will the Gentiles. The Jews will all genuinely believe that He is their "Savior" and "Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob," while some of the Gentiles will join them in belief and acknowledge this truth about God—for the sake of their own eternal salvations.

Isaiah 51

- 51:1 "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,
Who seek Yahweh:
Look to the rock from which you were hewn
And to the quarry from which you were dug.
- 51:2 "Look to Abraham your father
And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;
When he was but one I called him,
Then I blessed him and multiplied him."
- 51:3 Indeed, Yahweh will comfort Zion;
He will comfort all her waste places.
And her wilderness He will make like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of Yahweh;
Joy and gladness will be found in her,
Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.
- 51:4 "Pay attention to Me, O My people (עַמִּי),
And give ear to Me, O My nation (וְלְאַהֲרָבִי);
For a law (תּוֹרָה) will go forth from Me,
And I will set My justice (דִּין) for a light of the peoples.
- 51:5 "My righteousness (צְדָקָה) is near, My salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) has gone forth,
And My arms will judge the peoples (עַמִּים יִשְׁפָּטוּ);
The coastlands will wait for Me,
And for My arm they will wait expectantly.
- 51:6 "Lift up your eyes to the sky,
Then look to the earth beneath;
For the sky will vanish like smoke,
And the earth will wear out like a garment
And its inhabitants will die in like manner;
But My salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) will be forever (לְעוֹלָם),
And My righteousness will not wane.
- 51:7 "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness,
A people in whose heart is My law (עַם תּוֹרָתִי בְּלִבָּם);
Do not fear the reproach of man,
Nor be dismayed at their revilings.
- 51:8 "For the moth will eat them like a garment,

- And the grub will eat them like wool.
 But My righteousness will be forever (לְעוֹלָם),
 And My salvation (יְשׁוּעָתִי) to all generations.”
- 51:9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Yahweh;
 Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago.
 Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces,
 Who pierced the dragon?
- 51:10 Was it not You who dried up the sea,
 The waters of the great deep;
 Who made the depths of the sea a pathway
 For the redeemed to cross over?
- 51:11 So the ransomed of Yahweh will return (יְשׁוּבוּן)
 And come with joyful shouting to Zion,
 And everlasting (עוֹלָם) joy will be on their heads.
 They will obtain gladness and joy,
 And sorrow and sighing will flee away.
- 51:12 “I, even I, am He who comforts you.
 Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies
 And of the son of man who is made like grass,
- 51:13 That you have forgotten Yahweh your Maker,
 Who stretched out the heavens
 And laid the foundations of the earth,
 That you fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor,
 As he makes ready to destroy?
 But where is the fury of the oppressor?
- 51:14 “The exile will soon be set free, and will not die in the dungeon, nor will his bread be lacking.
- 51:15 “For I am Yahweh your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar
 (Yahweh of hosts is His name).
- 51:16 “I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand,
 to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’”
- 51:17 Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem,
 You who have drunk from Yahweh’s hand the cup of His anger;
 The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.
- 51:18 There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne,
 Nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.
- 51:19 These two things have befallen you;
 Who will mourn for you?
 The devastation and destruction, famine and sword;
 How shall I comfort you?
- 51:20 Your sons have fainted,
 They lie helpless at the head of every street,
 Like an antelope in a net,
 Full of the wrath of Yahweh,
 The rebuke of your God.
- 51:21 Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted,
 Who are drunk, but not with wine:
- 51:22 Thus says your Lord, Yahweh, even your God
 Who contends for His people,
 “Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling,
 The chalice of My anger;
 You will never drink it again (לֹא-תוֹסִיף לְשִׁתּוֹתָהּ עוֹד).
- 51:23 “I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,
 Who have said to you, ‘Lie down that we may walk over you.’
 You have even made your back like the ground
 And like the street for those who walk over it.”

In this chapter of Isaiah, God appeals to the “righteous” of Israel, His people, even after He has poured out His wrath on Jerusalem and sent the Jews into exile. He gives them hope and offers them His comfort, to the extent that they will never experience His anger and justice again. Instead, God will direct it towards their enemies. Consequently, the different elements of this passage could refer to a variety of times. There was the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the southern Kingdom of Judah around 600 B.C. There was the Roman destruction of Jerusalem when the Jews were driven from their land in A.D. 70 and 132-135. And there will be the invasion of the land of Israel and an attempt by the Beast of Revelation to destroy the Jews completely immediately before the return of the Messiah Jesus. So God could be speaking of one of these three events, or of all of them. But I think that the key to understanding Isaiah 51 is to ask, when do the Jews never experience again God’s judgment and disciplinary actions? It is only in the case of the third option above, after Jesus brings an end to their enemies and restores the Kingdom of Israel at his second appearance. Therefore, I will proceed under the assumption that the entire chapter addresses this event and see if it all fits together coherently.

In the first verse, the prophet writes, “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek Yahweh: Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug.” The context points to Isaiah’s wanting to encourage certain Jews who are experiencing two different aspects in their relationship with God. On the one hand, they are pursuing righteousness. Their fundamental desire is to obey God and to obtain all that fulfilling this condition brings—participation in the “great nation” of Abraham’s descendants and (I think we can say) eternal life according the two promises God made to him in Genesis 12:1-3. On the other hand, these particular Jews are discouraged because of the devastation they see around them.

Isaiah refers to this second aspect in v. 3, “Indeed, Yahweh will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Yahweh; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and sound of a melody.” Has God ever made the land of Israel “like Eden” so that, I assume, *only* “joy and gladness” are “found in her” along with “thanksgiving and sound of melody”? No. Certainly, today Israel is a prosperous country, but the people are not free of their enemies so that they experience only “joy and gladness.” Therefore, I think that Isaiah is referring not to the Babylonian or Roman destructions of Jerusalem, but to the end of the present age when God will complete His promise to Abraham and make the Jews a “great nation.”

This is why in v. 2 God encourages the Jews, “Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.” He wants them to reflect on their original ancestors and what this means for them. God “called” Abraham and “blessed...and multiplied him.” Abraham was, by definition, the first Jew, whom God chose out of all the other people on the earth around 2000 B.C. And He spoke to him about how he would affect the entire rest of the world. Later, his descendants grew in number while God preserved their existence as He headed towards the completion of His promise to make them the most powerful nation in history. So as the Jews remember this, they can be encouraged that the destruction they see around them in their country is not permanent. God will revitalize the land and make it continually productive.

In v. 4, God adds more to what He is going to do, “Pay attention to Me, O My people, and give ear to Me, O My nation; for a law will go forth from Me, and I will set My justice for a light of the peoples.” He commands the Jews, who are His people, to listen to Him carefully, because He wants “a law,” His *torah* (תּוֹרָה), to “go forth” from Him. This is probably more than simply the Mosaic Covenant, which God gave specifically to the nation of Israel in order for them to demonstrate His uniqueness and moral character to the rest of the world. He also says that He will establish His “justice for a light to the peoples.” He could be referring to justification, a sinner’s obtaining a standing before Him that will result in eternal life. If so, then this message went out to an extent as the truth of “light to the peoples,” the Jews and the Gentiles, when Jesus’ apostles proclaimed the good

news about him in the 1st century Roman Empire. But it will occur with full force when all the Jews become believers at the beginning of the millennial kingdom and they teach the entire world about him. Or God could be referring to simply the proper way to carry out justice within any human society, something which every nation and culture has lacked to some degree. When the Messiah comes to establish his rule over the world, he will require that all nations and all peoples submit to his definition of right and wrong with appropriate praise for doing the former and appropriate punishments for doing the latter. Because the Greek Septuagint translates the Hebrew *mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט) with *krisis* (κρίσις) and not *dikaio sunay* (δικαιοσύνη), which God goes on to talk about in the next verse, leads me to think that the second option is correct.

This will all mean, too, according to God, “My righteousness [*dikaio sunay* (δικαιοσύνη) in the Greek Septuagint] is near, My salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands will wait for Me, and for My arm they will wait expectantly” (v. 5). God’s justification (not “righteousness” in this context) and “salvation” will thus have gone forth from the Jews because of the actions of the Messiah, which we now know to include his life, death, and resurrection. And when he returns, God will rule (not “judge” in this context) “the peoples” so that many Gentiles (“the coastlands”) will “wait for” Him as God continues to govern the world with His “arm,” which is to say by means of His transcendent power and sovereignty. This, too, will be during the millennial kingdom, even though we know that a large group of Gentiles have genuinely believed in God and Jesus His Messiah between the latter’s two appearances.

Then, in v.6, God commands the Jews, “Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants will die in like manner; but My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not wane.” I realize that this certainly sounds like the disappearance of the present cosmos with God’s “salvation” in heaven being “forever,” i.e., eternal. However, I will suggest in chapters 65 and 66, where there is language which is just as explicit, that God metaphorically is referring to a radical change within the *present* realm, when Jesus returns. We have already seen comments about this new physical order in Isaiah 11:6, that “the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat.” Therefore, I think that God is encouraging the Jews, who survive the onslaught of armies who invade Israel just before Jesus’ return, to look at the creation and realize that it exists only as God wants it to. He can make the heavens, the earth, and its inhabitants vanish in a heartbeat. However, His salvation and justification for the Jewish people on the land of Israel will persist throughout the entire millennial kingdom according to His promise to Abraham.

And this is in line with God’s protecting the Jews from their human enemies as He says in vs. 7-8,

- 51:7 “Listen to Me, you who know righteousness,
 A people in whose heart is My law (עַם תּוֹרַתִּי בְּלִבָּם);
 Do not fear the reproach of man,
 Nor be dismayed at their revilings.
- 51:8 “For the moth will eat them like a garment,
 And the grub will eat them like wool.
 But My righteousness will be forever (לְעוֹלָם),
 And My salvation (וְיִשׁוּעָתִי) to all generations.”

God encourages His people who genuinely believe and obey Him, i.e., “who know righteousness, a people in whose heart is [His] law,” the *torah* (תּוֹרָה) and instruction which will culminate in Jesus’ teachings, not to be afraid of other human beings who threaten their lives and mock them for being Jews. These antagonists will get eaten by moths and grubs. In other words, they will disappear, while the Jews will go on existing “to all generations” in the restored Kingdom of Israel after God saves them from those who would harm them. The “generations” of Jews in this kingdom will go on and on

for as long as God wants. This is why Revelation 20 says that it will last for a thousand years, which is symbolic of a long time.

Now Isaiah in vs. 9-10 exhorts God to be the God He has claimed and demonstrated Himself to be,

- 51:9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Yahweh;
 Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago.
 Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces,
 Who pierced the dragon?
 51:10 Was it not You who dried up the sea,
 The waters of the great deep;
 Who made the depths of the sea a pathway
 For the redeemed to cross over?

The prophet is saying to God, “Do not fall asleep on us, Your people, the Jews.” Indeed, he wants Him to use the same strength and power He revealed when He rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. We have seen in Isaiah 30:7 that God calls Egypt “Rahab,” whom the prophet says here He “cut...in pieces,” meaning that God destroyed Egypt’s army. This event included the parting of the Red Sea, so that God “made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed [the freed Israelites] to cross over.” As the circumstances described in chapter 51 progress, Isaiah encourages God to exercise His power in like manner.

The result in v. 11 is this, “So the ransomed of Yahweh will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.” God will free Jews around the world from their “slavery” under the authority of Gentile governments, and they will “return and come with joyful shouting to Zion,” to Jerusalem and the land of Israel. From that time on, they will experience “everlasting joy,” which is to say joy that is *‘olam* (עוֹלָם). It will last for as long as they live in the millennial kingdom. Thus, “sorrow and sighing” among the Jews “will flee away” and be no more while they enjoy the environment of *shalom* with their Messiah ruling over them and the rest of the world.

God then repeats in vs. 12-13,

- 51:12 “I, even I, am He who comforts you.
 Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies
 And of the son of man who is made like grass,
 51:13 That you have forgotten Yahweh your Maker,
 Who stretched out the heavens
 And laid the foundations of the earth,
 That you fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor,
 As he makes ready to destroy?
 But where is the fury of the oppressor?”

It seems that the Jews before the appearance of their Messiah to reestablish the Kingdom of Israel are discouraged and fearful of their enemies who must be surrounding them or even invading their land to do them harm. But God urges them to fear no one “who is made like grass,” which is to say who fades away and dies eventually. Instead, they should remember their Creator, Yahweh, who has brought the whole rest of creation into existence. For eventually “the fury of the oppressor” who would mistreat the Jews will be no longer. This is because God states categorically in vs. 14-16,

- 51:14 “The exile will soon be set free, and will not die in the dungeon,
 nor will his bread be lacking.
 51:15 “For I am Yahweh your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar
 (Yahweh of hosts is His name).
 51:16 “I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand,

to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’”

The Jews who live outside the land of Israel and who are probably suffering under extremely harsh conditions will be “set free” from their pain and suffering so that they may return to the land. And this will happen because God is their God, Yahweh, who controls every drop of water in the oceans and every molecule of air in the wind that “stirs up the sea.” He has not only made the cosmos, but He has always promised to His chosen people to say to them all, “You are My people” when they also say to Him as people with circumcised hearts and authentic belief, “You are our God.” Such has been the message to them throughout the Old Testament—that it will happen ultimately when He makes them a “great nation” according to the Abrahamic Covenant.

And in vs. 17-20 God also speaks directly to those Jews who are going through hardship in Israel,

- 51:17 Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem,
You who have drunk from Yahweh’s hand the cup of His anger;
The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.
- 51:18 There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne,
Nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.
- 51:19 These two things have befallen you;
Who will mourn for you?
The devastation and destruction, famine and sword;
How shall I comfort you?
- 51:20 Your sons have fainted,
They lie helpless at the head of every street,
Like an antelope in a net,
Full of the wrath of Yahweh,
The rebuke of your God.

These Jews have also experienced God’s wrath and judgment as did the ones living at the time of the Babylonian invasion and destruction around 600 B.C. and during the Roman devastation of A.D. 70 and 132-135. And they are becoming sleepy in their faith as if they have drunk strong wine that has dulled their spiritual senses. God also points out that there are no good leaders of the Jews. It is almost as though all the Jews have gone astray from God. And certainly the result has been that the entire nation has experienced God’s wrath so that many of them “have fainted” and “lie helpless” in the street, “like an antelope in a net.” There is “devastation and destruction, famine and sword” on the whole land of Israel. And how will God comfort them? He tells them in vs. 21-23,

- 51:21 Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted,
Who are drunk, but not with wine:
- 51:22 Thus says your Lord, Yahweh, even your God
Who contends for His people,
“Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling,
The chalice of My anger;
You will never drink it again (לֹא-הוֹכִיפִי לְשִׁתוּתָהָ עוֹד).
- 51:23 “I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,
Who have said to you, ‘Lie down that we may walk over you.’
You have even made your back like the ground
And like the street for those who walk over it.”

God again wants the Jews to pay attention to Him, especially those who are “afflicted.” Yes, they are “drunk,” but not with strong drink. Their inebriation is the effect of His judgments and disciplinary actions. They have become senseless in the midst of God’s wrath towards the nation of Israel. However, He “contends for His people.” He fights for them, not against them, implying that things are changing. He is in the process of removing His anger from them, and they “will never drink

[from the chalice of His wrath] again.” Never? Yes, never. But when will this actually be the case in the Jews’ history? Only at the end of the present age when the Messiah appears to restore the Kingdom of Israel, when Jesus returns and fulfills completely the mission God has assigned him regarding the present earth. And the change for the Jews will not be finished until God pours out His wrath on their enemies and destroys those who have been their “tormentors.” These are the same Gentile nations who have said to the Jews, “Lie down that we may walk over you,” and they have successfully made them do so. But never again! God’s wrath and judgment of the Gentile nations will ensure this as the Jews enter into the millennial kingdom. And on what basis will all this happen? God’s promises, guarantee, and oath in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants.

Isaiah 52:1-12

- 52:1 Awake, awake,
Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion;
Clothe yourself in your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;
For the uncircumcised and the unclean
Will no longer come into you.
- 52:2 Shake yourself from the dust, rise up,
O captive Jerusalem;
Loose yourself from the chains around your neck,
O captive daughter of Zion.
- 52:3 For thus says Yahweh, “You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money.”
- 52:4 For thus says Adonai Yahweh, “My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there;
then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.
- 52:5 “Now therefore, what do I have here,” declares Yahweh,
“seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?”
Again Yahweh declares, “Those who rule over them howl,
and My name is continually blasphemed all day long.
- 52:6 “Therefore My people shall know My name;
therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, ‘Here I am.’”
- 52:7 How lovely on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace (שָׁלוֹם)
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation (יְשׁוּעָה),
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns (מָלָךְ)!”
- 52:8 Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices,
They shout joyfully together;
For they will see with their own eyes
When Yahweh restores Zion (בָּשׂוּב יְהוָה צִיּוֹן).
- 52:9 Break forth, shout joyfully together,
You waste places of Jerusalem (חֲרָבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם);
For Yahweh has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
- 52:10 Yahweh has bared His holy arm
In the sight of all the nations,
That all the ends of the earth (כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אֲרֶץ) may see
The salvation of our God (יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ).
- 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there,
Touch nothing unclean;
Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves,
You who carry the vessels of Yahweh.
- 52:12 But you will not go out in haste,

Nor will you go as fugitives;
 For Yahweh will go before you,
 And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

The prophet begins this passage with a shout to the city of Jerusalem, that it should awake from its sleep because God is bringing about a new thing there. He says in v. 1, “Awake, awake, clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; clothe yourself in your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for the uncircumcised and the unclean will no longer come into you.” The city as the center of worship of Yahweh has seen weakness, ugliness, and disobedience towards Him. But now it will be strong and beautiful. And those who ignore or reject the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants will not enter it. The question again for us is when is this going to happen. Is Isaiah addressing the Jews of his day, before the Babylonian captivity which took place around 600 B.C.? Or is he speaking to those who will return 70 years later? Or is he looking at a time much more future when God will restore the Kingdom of Israel through the appearance of the Messiah, indeed, the second appearance of the Messiah?

Because the prophet says that “the uncircumcised and the unclean” will no longer enter in Jerusalem, the third option makes the most sense, even though he also refers to the upcoming Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and captive exile of the people of the Kingdom of Judah. But the future spiritual cleanliness of the Jews will be when God circumcises all their hearts, and they will live securely and prosperously on the land which He has promised them through the Abrahamic Covenant. In addition, no Gentile will be allowed on the land or in the city without being fully committed to both this covenant and the Mosaic Covenant. And perhaps Isaiah is implying that there will be multiple times when the Gentiles take over and/or destroy Jerusalem during the history of the Jews. But he also exhorts God’s chosen people to grab hold of the inner, beautiful strength which God is giving them by changing their hearts and to employ it for the good of obeying Him as He has always required of them since the Abrahamic Covenant around 2000 B.C.

So, as he goes on in vs. 2-5, it seems that Isaiah is using the imminent Babylonian captivity to encourage the future Jews of their final restoration by God,

52:2 Shake yourself from the dust, rise up,

O captive Jerusalem;

Loose yourself from the chains around your neck,

O captive daughter of Zion.

52:3 For thus says Yahweh, “You were sold for nothing
 and you will be redeemed without money.”

52:4 For thus says Adonai Yahweh, “My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside there;
 then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

52:5 “Now therefore, what do I have here,” declares Yahweh,
 “seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?”
 Again Yahweh declares, “Those who rule over them howl,
 and My name is continually blasphemed all day long.

From this perspective, Jerusalem has been reduced to rubble, and its people have been taken captive. This sounds like 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, completed his invasion and destruction of the southern Kingdom of Judah, taking its inhabitants into exile to his capital city. God reminds them, though, that they are His people, that the first time they experienced oppressive slavery was over nine hundred years earlier in Egypt. And what happened? He implies that He freed them from the Egyptians because of His *hesed* and constant faithfulness. Then, the second time this happened was when the Assyrians captured the Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. for no good reason. God means that, while He had proper justification for bringing the Assyrians down on the northern kingdom, i.e., because of their rebellion against Him, the Assyrians were acting out of arrogance,

pride, and selfishness, so that, on a human level, they “oppressed [the Jews] without cause.” Now the same thing is happening to Judah by the Babylonians.

Both are examples of power-hungry leaders who have merely lusted for the land expansion of their empires—even though God has made it clear that the Jews deserved His disciplinary actions because of their disobedience of Him. In other words, God has had His good reasons for Jews’ being driven from their land according to His warnings in Deuteronomy 28. But the Assyrians and Babylonians have had only evil intents for their destructive actions. Therefore, they are merely God’s instruments of justice, whom He will hold accountable for their pride and arrogance, as He fortunately does in regard to all evil leaders of nations. And now the Babylonians, thinking that they and their gods have ascendancy over the Jews and their God, are mocking God and the Jewish people as if He is weak and they are completely defenseless. Verse 5 says, “Again Yahweh declares, ‘Those who rule over them howl, and My name is continually blasphemed all day long.’” Certainly, this will also be the case when the Beast of Revelation invades Israel and exercises authority over the Jews immediately preceding Jesus’ return.

In addition, God says in v. 3 that the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians “sold” His people into slavery without really getting paid for them. But God is promising to free the people of Israel without paying the Babylonians (or any else for that matter) any ransom. Therefore, the prophet exhorts the Jews in v. 2 to shake the dust from the destruction of Jerusalem off themselves and rise up. They also should loose themselves from the chains of the Babylonian captivity, which they will also do completely with respect to their enemies at the end of the present age.

And v. 6 also provides concrete hope for the nation of Israel, “Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore in that day I am the one who is speaking, ‘Here I am.’” Because the Babylonians are mocking God, thinking that they are more powerful than He is after taking His people into captivity, God is going to show them that they are absolutely wrong. He will also demonstrate to the Jews that all along He has been their God, even while disciplining them by handing them over to their enemies. They shall “know [His] name,” His purposes, power, and role in human history, when He rescues them from the Babylon and they return to Jerusalem. As predicted in Isaiah 45, the Persians under Cyrus their king will defeat the Babylonians in 539 B.C., and he will issue an executive order permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and its temple. Therefore, it would seem that the “day” of which the prophet speaks in v. 6 is when He accomplishes the release of the Jews from Babylon as they head back to their own land. But this is also in the context of v. 1 when “the uncircumcised and the unclean will no longer” enter Jerusalem. In other words, “in that day” in v. 6 also points forward to the more distant future of the “great nation” of the millennial kingdom.

And having encouraged the nation of Israel in reference to their escape from Babylon (and their preservation throughout the rest of their history), I think that Isaiah now definitely turns his attention to the far distant future in vs. 7-10,

52:7 How lovely on the mountains

Are the feet of him who brings good news,
Who announces peace (שָׁלוֹם)
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation (יְשׁוּעָה),
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns (מְלִכָּךְ)!”

52:8 Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices,

They shout joyfully together;
For they will see with their own eyes
When Yahweh restores Zion (בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה צִיּוֹן).

52:9 Break forth, shout joyfully together,

You waste places of Jerusalem (הַחֲרָבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם);
For Yahweh has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.

52:10 Yahweh has bared His holy arm
 In the sight of all the nations,
 That all the ends of the earth (כָּל-אַפְסֵי-אֲרֶץ) may see
 The salvation of our God (יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ).

Eventually someone will bring a message of “good news” to Jerusalem. He will announce “peace,” that is, *shalom*, to God’s people. This in turn will bring them “happiness” and “salvation” from all their enemies. God through this person will rescue the Jews from all the oppression and heartache they have experienced. And he will state categorically to them, “Your God reigns,” that He is the king of all creation and will reign over them and the rest of the world. Thus, Isaiah urges the Jews, “Listen!” The watchmen on the walls of the city, whose responsibility is to be on the lookout for those who would seek to attack it and do it harm, will see instead their God, who will “restore Zion” by fulfilling His promises to Abraham and David, making the Jews a great nation and providing them with a powerful and permanent king, the Messiah. As a result, they will “shout joyfully together.”

Then, the prophet calls out to the city itself, which will be reduced to a wasteland by first the Babylonians and then by others throughout the Jews’ history, for it to cry out with joy also. And the reason it can is because God brings comfort to His people and frees them from their enemies. This is the third mention of God’s comfort of the Jews in Isaiah (cf. Isaiah 40:1; 49:13). Clearly, He is remaining faithful to them to free them from oppression and suffering which typically comes from the Gentiles. And He will do this with His great power and strength that is unmatched by anyone or anything in the creation. “His holy arm” will perform the rescue of His chosen people “in the sight of all the nations,” so that “all the ends of the earth may see the salvation” of the Jews’ God. Perhaps Isaiah is limiting his meaning of “ends of the earth” to the surrounding Middle East of his day. But he also may very well be saying that wherever there are human beings on this earth which the land of Israel shares with all other nations, God and His fulfilling His promises to Abraham’s descendants will become known and appreciated.

Then, in the last two verses of this passage, the prophet seems to go back to the forthcoming exile to Babylon,

52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there,
 Touch nothing unclean;
 Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves,
 You who carry the vessels of Yahweh.
 52:12 But you will not go out in haste,
 Nor will you go as fugitives;
 For Yahweh will go before you,
 And the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

“There” is probably Babylon. Isaiah is encouraging the Jews who will be set free from their captivity by Cyrus of Persia to leave the city. The Levites as the God’s designated tribe of priests will “carry the vessels of Yahweh” back to Jerusalem and place them in the new temple once it is rebuilt. And none of the Jews will have to hurry as if there is the possibility that the Babylonians or Persians will change their minds and either retain them or chase after them the way Pharaoh and the Egyptians did approximately a thousand years earlier. Consequently, they will not be fugitives from Babylon as if they are illegally escaping prison and deserve to be tracked down and recaptured. They will have every right to leave the city according to Cyrus’ edict. In addition, Yahweh, their God, will be their vanguard and their “rear guard,” leading them and following them in order to protect them on both sides from any potential enemies.

So I think that this passage is a mixture of references to the Babylonian event in the 6th century B.C. and to the final restoration of Israel under the Messiah. In regard to the former, Isaiah foretells and encourages his listeners and readers to acknowledge that God is going to follow through on His

threats in Deuteronomy to judge and discipline the Kingdom of Judah, while also remaining true to His promise to Abraham to preserve the people even in exile. In regard to the latter, the prophet assures them that God will fulfill completely what He has sworn to do for Abraham, to make his descendants the most powerful nation in history. They will live in “peace,” shalom (), on the land because they will imitate Isaiah, “Our God reigns!!”

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

- 52:13 Behold, My Servant will prosper (יִשְׁכַּח),
He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.
- 52:14 Just as many were astonished at you, My people,
So His appearance was marred more than any man
And His form more than the sons of men.
- 52:15 Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.
- 53:1 Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?
- 53:2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
- 53:3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
- 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted (מִכָּה אֱלֹהִים וּמִעֲנָה).
- 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being (שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ) fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
- 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But Yahweh has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.
- 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.
- 53:8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?
- 53:9 His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.
- 53:10 But Yahweh was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;

If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
 He will see His offspring (עֲרֵב),
 He will prolong His days,
 And the good pleasure of Yahweh will prosper in His hand.

53:11 As a result of the anguish of His soul,
 He will see it and be satisfied;
 By His knowledge the Righteous One,
 My Servant, will justify the many,
 As He will bear their iniquities.

53:12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
 And He will divide the booty with the strong;
 Because He poured out Himself to death,
 And was numbered with the transgressors;
 Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
 And interceded for the transgressors.

Who is the object of God's words in this passage? Is it Isaiah, who will suffer as a godly prophet and yet find salvation through Yahweh that will affect all Jews because of his willingness to obey God under such extreme circumstances? Or is it the nation of Israel, who will suffer as God's chosen people and yet find ultimate salvation in His keeping the Abrahamic Covenant for the sake of the entire world who will also experience God's earthly *shalom*? Or is it the Messiah, who will suffer as the sole means of forgiveness of sin for mankind, Jews and Gentiles, so that he finds vindication in his perfect obedience to God? It is possible to make an argument for any one of these three options. But, as we work through the entire passage, I think that the best argument is for the third option. God through Isaiah is predicting Jesus' experience during his first appearance. It will be anything but satisfying and pleasant. Indeed, it will be excruciatingly painful. However, fortunately it will yield enormous dividends for both the Jewish nation and those Gentiles who are willing to imitate Abraham's faith as God promised in Genesis 12:1-3.

The first verse of this passage, Isaiah 52:13, says, "Behold, My Servant will prosper. He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted." God begins with what must be the end of His Servant's role in history. He "will prosper." The Hebrew word *yaskeel* (יָשָׁע) can mean to understand, be wise, and, by inference, to succeed on the basis of one's wisdom. The Greek Septuagint translates it with *sunaysei* (συνήσει), which means to understand to have an intelligent grasp of something, also in order to succeed on the basis of wisdom. If we consider the first line of this verse with the second, God is saying that this Servant will be given not only wisdom and understanding, but he will do something with them that will lead to his being esteemed as a truly great person. But is this Servant a mere individual or a group of people, such as the nation of Israel? The rest of the passage will point to an individual, indeed, the Messiah Jesus who suffers death in order to qualify as the sole advocate of sinners before God. His suffering will lead to his exaltation as God's proxy and substitute as the permanent king of Israel and their champion and savior from their enemies and even God's eternal condemnation.

However, in spite of Jesus' final status, the process by which he gets there will not be a pleasant one according to 52:14, "Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so his appearance was marred more than any man and his form more than the sons of men." Even if we in the modern world have never observed someone being crucified, we can imagine that it must do awful things to the person's appearance. And add to it that the Roman soldiers first beat Jesus and whipped him with a leather strips with pieces of bone attached, and he must have become practically unrecognizable by even his closest friends and family. God says that, likewise, the people of Israel have been so mistreated during the course of their history that their "appearance" as the "great nation" which He promised them in Genesis 12 has been "marred." While individual Jews have become authentic followers of Yahweh down through history, as an entire group they have hardly looked like a people

who together are demonstrating biblical righteousness and instructing the rest of the world in the truth of God.

However, v. 15 goes on to say that there will be great benefit for others in Jesus' being so tragically disfigured, "Thus he will sprinkle many nations. Kings will shut their mouths on account of him, for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand." The message of Jesus' crucifixion will go out to even the Gentile nations, beyond the borders of the land of Israel and the Jews. The result will be that their leaders and rulers will be struck silent when and if they truly understand the meaning and significance of Jesus' death. They will either acknowledge their own sin and need for his intercession in order to obtain God's eternal mercy and forgiveness, or, jumping ahead to his second appearance, they will have to submit to his worldwide rule without complaint or disagreement.

But then it seems that Isaiah looks ahead to the response which God's "Servant" will receive from his own people, the Jews, and asks in 53:1, "Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?" The answer to the first question is, "Not many Jews during Jesus' three-year ministry." The answer to the second question is, "To both the Jews of his time on the land of Israel and to any Romans who were privy to his miracles and especially his resurrection." In other words, in spite of all his miracles and becoming a very the public figure so as to attract the attention of the Jewish leadership of his day, Jesus was a miserable failure as an evangelist at his first coming.

Then, Isaiah, speaking for all the Jews and perhaps for all humanity, says in 53:2, "For he grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; he has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to him." This Servant, Jesus, grew up in Israel like a breath of fresh air to those who had been inhaling only the stale air of the erroneous teaching of the scribes and Pharisees of his day. The theological and spiritual "ground" in his culture was dry and unfruitful. But he was bringing truth to the Jews. And this was in the midst of his appearance as a young man and adult who would not necessarily attract anyone's attention. If people passed him walking down the street of Nazareth, Capernaum, or Jerusalem, they would think that he was just an average Jew going about his business like all other Jews. No one would stop and say, "Wow, this man looks like our Messiah who will defeat our enemies, restore the Kingdom of Israel, and rule the whole world!" Instead, to his people he looked like an ordinary, mortal, and mundane fellow Jew.

However, vs. 3-8 go on to indicate that this normal looking man eventually became considered Jewish people's enemy,

- 53:3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem him.
- 53:4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted (מִכָּה אֱלֹהִים וּמִעֲנָה).
- 53:5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
- 53:6 All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But Yahweh has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.
- 53:7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,

And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,
So He did not open His mouth.

53:8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?

Isaiah declares that “we,” his fellow Israelites, “despised” and abandoned this man. Indeed, they “did not esteem him” as their Messiah. It was the exact opposite. They viewed him as a charlatan and deceiver, someone whom even God was rejecting while they carried out their plans against him and executed him on a cross. But Isaiah knows that he was killed “for our transgressions” and “our iniquities.” In other words, he became a propitiatory offering before God, so that he received what the Jews’ deserve, “chastening.” And this was for the sake of their eventually obtaining peace with God and “well-being,” *shalom* in Hebrew. Through his suffering they also were “healed” of their wounds that they received by being oppressed by their enemies. Indeed, oppression came to him from his own people. The Jews do not deserve to become a “great nation” commensurate with God’s promise in Genesis 12. However, He, through Jesus as their crucified Messiah, is still going to make it happen.

And this is in spite of their being like “sheep” who “have gone astray.” They have constantly rejected God and His Messiah. Yet, fortunately, “Yahweh has caused the iniquity” of all us Jews (as Isaiah thinks about himself too as a sinner) “to fall on” Jesus. As the morally perfect icon of God on earth, he did not deserve death. But all us sinners do. Nevertheless, he was willing to obey God and die on the cross so that he qualified for his role as High Priest and Savior. Isaiah further predicts the Messiah’s experience in v. 7, “He was oppressed” and “afflicted” by his own people. However, he never complained to them about their mistreating them. Instead, he remained “silent” like a “sheep...before its shearers,” quietly submitting to God’s required role for him as the one who had to die for all our sins.

Once the Sanhedrin and the Romans crucified Jesus, his “generation” of Jews truly believed that they had rid themselves of this irritating man whom they considered a false Messiah. They concluded that he was finally “cut off from the land of the living” after he was buried. However, this was all for God’s purpose of his dying “for the transgression of [Isaiah’s] people.” They deserved death, not their Messiah. However, “Yahweh was pleased to crush him, putting him to grief. If he would render himself as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days, and the good pleasure of Yahweh will prosper in his hand” (53:10). By willingly going to the cross, Jesus was subordinating himself to God’s sovereign rule and eternal plans. In other words, it was ultimately Yahweh who “was pleased to crush him” and put “him to grief” when the Romans crucified him at the behest of the Jewish leadership. However, there was an important priestly purpose in what happened. Jesus became “a guilt offering” for both sinful Jews and sinful Gentiles. As a result, he will “see his offspring,” those Jewish “children” especially to whom, in a sense, he gave birth by becoming the instrument of God’s sovereign plan of making the Jewish people his people in the millennial kingdom when he returns. In this way, God’s “good pleasure” and purposes “prosper” in Jesus’ “hand.” God will be so delighted when He finally keeps His oath and promise of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants to shape the Jewish people into a “great nation” with their final king, Jesus, ruling over them.

God continues His description of the effects of Jesus’ death in v. 11, “As a result of the anguish of his soul, he will see it and be satisfied; by his knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.” Jesus will look at all the pain his “soul,” *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ) in Hebrew, meaning his whole existence as a bona fide human being, endured at the hands of both the Romans and the Jews, and he will find great satisfaction in it. This will be because he will recognize that there is great purpose in what he has done. He will know that his death brings justification and forgiveness to the people of Israel, who eventually will all believe in him as their Messiah. His death will be instead of the death which they deserve from God, because he will provide

them with a position before Him whereby they stand to obtain participation in the temporary “great nation” of the Jews in the present realm and also eternal life in the next.

And Jesus will receive his own reward from, “Therefore, I will allot him a portion with the great and he will divide the booty with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he himself bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors” (v. 12). By carrying out all that God requires of him, including his willingly pouring “out himself to death” and being considered by the Jews as someone who is violating the Mosaic Covenant, Jesus will attain the status of the greatest human being who has ever lived. He will also share this position and the authority which comes from it with the “strong” of faith. These are the people who persevered in their trusting God through the trials and tribulations of their lives. They, too, will rule with Jesus over the restored Kingdom of Israel and the world according to Revelation 20. God also repeats that his role has been to bear “the sin of many” in order to be able to intercede for the people who have actually broken the Mosaic Covenant, his fellow Jews. Consequently, Jesus’ death is a necessary part of God’s fulfilling His promise to make Abraham’s descendants a “great nation.” This is another good reason why restricting the purpose of Jesus’ dying, rising from the dead, ascending into heaven, and later returning earth to only obtaining eternal life for sinners does not make sense. He certainly does this, but He is also central to the Jews’ becoming the most powerful political, social, and religious entity in the world and in human history. These two effects of Jesus’ work go hand in glove. If Jesus does not die as God’s instrument for making an entire generation of Jews authentic believers who constitute the “great nation” of Genesis 12, with many more believing generations after them, then he does not die to provide eternal life for both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. And vice versa. Without one, the other does not happen. Therefore, to deny one is to deny the other and misunderstand God and His purposes.

Isaiah 54

- 54:1 “Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child;
Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed;
For the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous
Than the sons of the married woman,” says Yahweh.
- 54:2 “Enlarge the place of your tent;
Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not;
Lengthen your cords
And strengthen your pegs.
- 54:3 “For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left.
And your descendants will possess nations (וְיָרְדוּ עַד גּוֹיִם יְיָ) (וְיָרְדוּ עַד גּוֹיִם יְיָ)
And will resettle the desolate cities.
- 54:4 “Fear not, for you will not be put to shame;
And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced;
But you will forget the shame of your youth,
And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.
- 54:5 “For your husband is your Maker,
Whose name is Yahweh of hosts;
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,
Who is called the God of all the earth (אֱלֹהֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ). (אֱלֹהֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ).
- 54:6 “For Yahweh has called you,
Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
Even like a wife of one’s youth when she is rejected,”
Says your God.
- 54:7 “For a brief moment I forsook you,
But with great compassion I will gather you (אֶקְרָא בְרַחֲמִים). (אֶקְרָא בְרַחֲמִים).
- 54:8 “In an outburst of anger
I hid My face from you for a moment,

But with everlasting lovingkindness (וּבְרִחְסָד עוֹלָם) I will have compassion on you,”
Says Yahweh your Redeemer.

- 54:9 “For this is like the days of Noah to Me,
When I swore (נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי) that the waters of Noah
Would not flood the earth again;
So I have sworn (נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי) that I will not be angry with you
Nor will I rebuke you.
- 54:10 “For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,
And My covenant of peace (וּבְרִית שְׁלוֹמִי) will not be shaken,”
Says Yahweh who has compassion on you.
- 54:11 “O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted (לֹא נִחְמָה),
Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,
And your foundations I will lay in sapphires.
- 54:12 “Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,
And your gates of crystal,
And your entire wall of precious stones.
- 54:13 “All your sons will be taught of Yahweh;
And the well-being (שְׁלוֹם) of your sons will be great.
- 54:14 “In righteousness you will be established;
You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear;
And from terror, for it will not come near you.
- 54:15 “If anyone fiercely assails you it will not be from Me.
Whoever assails you will fall because of you.
- 54:16 “Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals
And brings out a weapon for its work;
And I have created the destroyer to ruin.
- 54:17 “No weapon that is formed against you will prosper;
And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.
This is the heritage of the servants of Yahweh,
And their vindication is from Me,” declares Yahweh.

Isaiah 54 is such a wonderful encouragement for the people of Israel to look forward to a time of peace, security, and strength on the land which God has promised them through Abraham. God begins in v. 1, “‘Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child. Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; for the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman,’ says Yahweh.” In this analogy, the “married woman,” who typically has many children by her husband, represents unbelieving Israel, whose “sons” as unbelievers likewise are many during the time of Isaiah and remain such up to the time of Jesus’ return. However, they will become few and indeed non-existent in the renewed Kingdom of Israel, the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. This kingdom will be inhabited by the “barren” and “desolate one,” the unmarried woman, who typically has no children. She is analogous to believing Israel, and her believing “sons” are few during the time of Isaiah and remain few up to the time of Jesus’ return. However, she will eventually become incredibly fertile, so that her “sons” will be not just the majority when Jesus restores the Kingdom of Israel. Instead, they will be the only kind of Jews during his rule over the entire world.

Because God plans this reversal to take place when He fulfills His promise to make the Jews a “great nation” according to Genesis 12:2, He exhorts the ones who are in the minority in Isaiah’s day (and any other time in Israel’s history right up to the moment when the Messiah appears to establish his reign over the Jews and the world) to “shout for joy” and to “break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud.” They have hope that their situation of living among unbelievers on their land will eventually come to an end, so that all Jews living with one another in Israel will be genuine followers of God and His Messiah.

Accordingly, God goes on in vs. 2-3,

54:2 "Enlarge the place of your tent;
Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not;
Lengthen your cords
And strengthen your pegs.

54:3 "For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left.
And your descendants will possess nations
And will resettle the desolate cities.

God assures the Jews that they will break out of their restricted space on the land of Israel and occupy it entirely. In addition, their "descendants" will "possess nations," meaning, I think, that they will rule over them under the guidance and leadership of their Messiah. Therefore, He encourages them to "enlarge" their home and spread on the whole land. They will also "resettle the desolate cities" in Israel. The desolation may refer to the soon to come Babylonian invasion and their destruction of Judah's cities. But God is more likely looking into the distant future at the final invasion of Israel's enemies immediately before Jesus' return. Even though the armies of the Beast of Revelation will do great damage to Israel and its people, the Messiah's appearance will halt their efforts so that the Jews of the first generation of the millennial kingdom may rebuild their cities and live within them throughout the remaining generations of the "great nation" according to Genesis 12.

Then, God offers further encouragement to them in vs. 4-8,

54:4 "Fear not, for you will not be put to shame;
And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced;
But you will forget the shame of your youth,
And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

54:5 "For your husband is your Maker,
Whose name is Yahweh of hosts;
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,
Who is called the God of all the earth.

54:6 "For Yahweh has called you,
Like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
Even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected,"
Says your God.

54:7 "For a brief moment I forsook you,
But with great compassion I will gather you.

54:8 "In an outburst of anger
I hid My face from you for a moment,
But with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you,"
Says Yahweh your Redeemer.

God first encourages them not to fear or think that they will experience any more shame. Certainly, the Jews have experienced fear and shame in the face of all their enemies, starting with Egypt, and then moving on to Assyria, Babylon, Rome, the medieval Christians, Hitler, Russia, and eventually the Beast of Revelation—all of whom to some degree have wanted or will want to cripple the Jews and render them powerless in the world. God then likens the Jews to a young person who has grown up, but in their youth they were afraid and ashamed. During their past history, God's chosen people were like this youth—afraid of persecution and humiliated by the mistreatment they experienced. But now they are an adult, meaning that they have arrived at their final condition within the world where they are the "great nation"—unafraid and confident in the midst of anyone who might be hostile towards them. God with Jesus will destroy the enemies who have invaded their land immediately prior to Jesus' return, and together they will make sure that no one harms them afterwards during the existence of the millennial kingdom.

God also likens the Jews to a woman who has lost her husband, a widow. And He calls Himself, their Maker, their “husband.” Yes, God did abandon (of sorts) His wife, the nation of Israel. Or at least He made them feel like a divorced woman. But this was only to make them realize that there are consequences to their disobeying the Mosaic Covenant. They have even been attacked on the land of Israel by their enemies, and in some cases they have been driven off the land which God had promised them. And these times of suffering have made it look as though God has completely abandoned them. But does this mean that He has forsaken them forever? Absolutely not! As God says in v. 7, “For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you.” Thus, at the end of the present age, when God fills out His plans for the Jewish people, He will gather them from the ends of the earth to bring them back to His and their land. This is all because, “**with everlasting lovingkindness**,” He “will have compassion” on them (emphasis mine). In other words, it is God’s unwavering *hesed*, His constant and loyal faithfulness, that keeps Him working in the world on behalf of the Jews so as to preserve them and prepare them for their final hour of glory, the millennial kingdom, as His chosen people.

God goes on to make the same point in vs. 9-10,

54:9 “For this is like the days of Noah to Me,
When I swore that the waters of Noah
Would not flood the earth again;
So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you
Nor will I rebuke you.

54:10 “For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake,
But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you,
And My covenant of peace will not be shaken,”
Says Yahweh who has compassion on you.

God likens the situation in which the Jews find themselves to that of Noah. In Genesis 9, He makes a covenant with him, the sole survivor of the flood (along with his family), never again to destroy the earth and mankind with water. In the same way, God has “sworn” that He will never allow the effect of His anger towards the nation of Israel to reach the level where He completely destroys them (or abandons His promises to them). Indeed, the natural world may go through extensive change when “the mountains [are] removed and the hills...shake,” but God will never cause His *hesed* towards the Jews to disappear. This is to say that His “covenant of peace/*shalom* will not be shaken.” God assured Abraham, Moses, and David that He would eventually grant to the Jewish people, who are their descendants, the utmost sense of *shalom*, peace, safety, and security. And He will never back out of His promise, because He is “Yahweh who has compassion on” the nation of Israel. They may disobey Him to the highest degree, but this will never make Him give up on them. He will continue to be present among them until He finally makes them a nation of believers who rule the world.

God addresses this very issue in the last verses of this chapter, starting with vs. 11-12,

54:11 “O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,
Behold, I will set your stones in antimony,
And your foundations I will lay in sapphires.

54:12 “Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies,
And your gates of crystal,
And your entire wall of precious stones.

Israel is the “afflicted one, stormed tossed, and not comforted,” because they have consistently ignored and rejected God and their calling as His people with the result that they have suffered at the hands of their enemies. But this will change in the millennial kingdom when He frees them from all oppression and harm. It will be then that the building blocks of their cities, especially Jerusalem, will

be like precious stones. They will be set in place and never moved so that the people will always be protected from those who would seek to injure them. This is all metaphorical of the value and worth of God's protection of His people. It will be priceless and permanent.

And the cultural and political environment which the Jews will enjoy will be rich and safe as God says in vs. 13-17,

- 54:13 "All your sons will be taught of Yahweh;
And the well-being (שְׁלוֹמִים) of your sons will be great.
- 54:14 "In righteousness you will be established;
You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear;
And from terror, for it will not come near you.
- 54:15 "If anyone fiercely assails you it will not be from Me.
Whoever assails you will fall because of you.
- 54:16 "Behold, I Myself have created (אֶנְכִי בְרַאתִי) the smith who blows the fire of coals
And brings out a weapon for its work;
And I have created the destroyer to ruin.
- 54:17 "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper;
And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.
This is the heritage of the servants of Yahweh,
And their vindication is from Me," declares Yahweh.

The Jews as a spiritually and intellectually united people will finally all understand the Bible. Indeed, they "will be taught of Yahweh." And the entire nation will experience an incredible sense of well-being and peace, which is the word *shalom*. The people of Israel "will be established" on their land "in righteousness," meaning in a condition of pursuing doing what is right with the result that they suffer no harm at the hands of their enemies. Another way to say this is that they "will be far from oppression" and they "will not fear." They will be remotely distant "from terror," for no one and nothing that could strike fear and terror in their hearts will "come near" them.

In addition, God's judgments and disciplinary actions against the Jews will cease forever with the result that, "if anyone" tries to attack the Jews (as, for example, the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans did), it will not be because God is angry with them. The inference, too, is that no one will succeed in attacking them. As God says, "Whoever assails you will fall because of you." Because God is their God and they are His people, the Jews will enjoy perfect and complete protection by Him—for the first time in their history! God even admits in v. 16 that He is the creator, the origin of existence, of anyone who manufactures weapons. And if these weapons accomplish their purpose, especially the purpose of producing destruction among the Jews, it is He has "created the destroyer to ruin." Like Isaiah 45:6-7 which we looked at previously, this is a difficult truth to swallow. But it speaks to God's absolute sovereign rule over the creation, even over human choices. Yet, He declares in v. 17 that "no weapon that is formed against" the Jews will succeed—in the millennial kingdom! They may have succeeded in the past, but the bright future which God is describing here will be devoid of any suffering or harm occurring for the Jews. "And every tongue" of their enemies that tries to condemn them for the purpose of bringing destruction upon them, the Jews will turn right around and condemn these enemies for rebelling against God and refusing to embrace them as His chosen people.

Finally, at the end of v. 17, God says that all "this is the heritage" of the Jews. He means that they can know that they own and possess His protection and the condemnation and destruction of their enemies. It is what they inherit from Him in accordance to the promises and oaths He made to Abraham, Moses, and David in their respective covenants. The Jews' "vindication" or vengeance on behalf of God towards their enemies is from God, because they belong to Him into the perpetuity of the present earth, i.e., for as long as the current realm exists throughout the time of the Kingdom of Israel, which will be restored and renewed by Jesus the Messiah when he returns.

Isaiah 55

- 55:1 “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without cost.
- 55:2 “Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,
And delight yourself in abundance.
- 55:3 “Incline your ear and come to Me.
Listen, that you may live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) with you,
According to the faithful mercies shown to David (חֶסֶד דָּוִד הַנֶּאֱמָנִים).
- 55:4 “Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
A leader and commander for the peoples.
- 55:5 “Behold, you will call a nation you do not know,
And a nation which knows you not will run to you,
Because of Yahweh your God, even the Holy One of Israel (וְיִשְׁרָאֵל);
For He has glorified you.”
- 55:6 Seek Yahweh while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.
- 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way (דַּרְכּוֹ)
And the unrighteous man his thoughts (מַחְשְׁבֹתָיו);
And let him return to Yahweh,
And He will have compassion on him,
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
- 55:8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts (כִּי לֹא מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי מַחְשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם),
Nor are your ways My ways (וְלֹא דַרְכֵיכֶם דַּרְכֵּי),” declares Yahweh.
- 55:9 “For as the heavens are higher (גְּבוּהוֹ) than the earth,
So are My ways higher (גְּבוּהוֹ) than your ways (דַּרְכֵי מִדְּרָכֵיכֶם)
And My thoughts than your thoughts (וּמַחְשְׁבוֹתַי מִמַּחְשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם).
- 55:10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
- 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.
- 55:12 “For you will go out with joy
And be led forth with peace (וּבְשָׁלוֹם);
The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you,
And all the trees of the field will clap their hands.
- 55:13 “Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up,
And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up,
And it will be a memorial to Yahweh,
For an everlasting sign (לְאֹת עוֹלָם) which will not be cut off.”

Here in Isaiah 55 we have both an appeal to those who are deprived of the basics of life, water and food, and an assurance from God and the prophet that abundance is just around the corner—even though it may be a few thousand years in the future. God begins in v. 1, ““Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without cost.” We should notice first that the pronoun “you” in the Hebrew text (and Greek Septuagint) is plural. Thus, God is speaking to a group of people, and the nation of Israel is the most logical interpretive choice. But is God addressing the actual physical needs of the Jewish people, or is He speaking metaphorically of spiritual deprivation and abundance that has characterized them at some point in the past and will characterize them in the future respectively? Similarly, is He speaking to Isaiah’s contemporaries and/or to Jews in the future, perhaps those who will be living immediately before Jesus’ return? Let us continue and see what clues there are in the rest of the passage to answer these questions.

God continues in v. 2, “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance.” This still sounds as though He is referring to literal money and food, but with the additional detail that the Jews are spending their money on something other than food. Then, God also says that if they would only “listen carefully” to Him, implying that if they would also act appropriately on what He is saying to them, the result will be that they will eat good food abundantly with delight and joy.

Verse 3 seems to be going in the same direction, “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David.” Again, God exhorts the Jews to take serious notice of what He is saying so that they “may live”—physically or spiritually? He also states that their correct response to Him (as opposed to ignoring or rejecting His message) will include an “everlasting covenant” with them. We can assume that this is a new covenant, i.e., one in addition to and different from the three God has already made with the nation of Israel—the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the Davidic Covenant. Nevertheless, it will be in line with the Davidic Covenant as God says in the last part of this verse, “according to the faithful mercies shown to David.” David was a sinner, even a murderer and adulterer, but God made and kept a covenant with him to the effect that he and his descendants would rule Israel as their king. And David’s descendants were sinners like him throughout the existence of the southern Kingdom of Judah until its destruction in 586 B.C., so that, around 700 B.C., God is saying that His mercies, forgiveness, and faithfulness to David and the kings is and will remain steadfast. So just as God has remained constant in His commitment to Abraham, in order that eventually the Jewish people will become a “great nation,” He will likewise produce a new covenant in line with the Davidic Covenant. And this new covenant will be “everlasting” (*‘olam!*). In other words, this new covenant, which we can assume involves an “everlasting” king for the nation of Israel, will last for as long as God desires within the present realm, that is, for as long as God wants the “great nation” with its king as ruler to exist. We find out from the rest of the Bible that this will be the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

God then comments in v. 4 on His purposes for David, “Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.” David himself did not rule over any more people than his own, the Jews on the land of Israel. However, as we learned in Psalm 89, because he and the kings who descended from him were each the Son of God, God’s proxy and substitute on earth, they were “a witness to the peoples” of the world in regard to God’s existence, His righteousness, His justice, His morality, and His plans for the people of Israel and the Gentiles. Each one of them was intended to point to God’s morality, mercy, and blessing of eternal life for the Gentile nations. In this way, David and his fellow kings are each “a leader and commander for the peoples,” someone who guides the whole world towards repentance and salvation—whether Jews or Gentiles. But, of course, it is the final “David,” the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who does this most of all by living out his role as the suffering Messiah, resurrected Messiah, ascended Messiah, returning Messiah, and ruling Messiah.

But who is the “you” of v. 5, “Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, and a nation which knows you not will run to you, because of Yahweh your God, even the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you”? I think that it is the final “David,” the “witness [par excellence] to the peoples” of the world. Thus, God is saying to Jesus that he will “call a nation” to himself, indeed, one he does not know. This could be first and foremost the Jewish nation which the second line indicates does not

know him, because they have for the most part rejected him as their Messiah and king. And God also says the “He has glorified” this one who bears testimony to God’s plans and purposes. And how has He glorified him and borne testimony to His plans and purposes? By performing miracles through him, raising him from the dead, lifting him from the earth and into the heavens, and eventually causing him to return to establish the Kingdom of God on the land of Israel and in the entire world. Therefore, the “nation” to which God refers in this verse is more likely each ethnic and national group of people in the world. Some people among them “will run” to the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, for salvation. And certainly all the surviving Jews will do so to be saved from both their earthly enemies and God’s eternal condemnation and destruction. Thus, some of the Gentiles will follow suit with respect to God’s eternal judgment.

Now, in vs. 6-8, Isaiah addresses all the Jews with plural verbs,

55:6 Seek Yahweh while He may be found;
 Call upon Him while He is near.
 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way
 And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
 And let him return to Yahweh,
 And He will have compassion on him,
 And to our God,
 For He will abundantly pardon.

There will come a time for the Jews when it is too late to obtain God’s mercy and salvation. The Bible indicates that the boundary for the Jews of humbling themselves before God is the death of any one of them or the beginning of the millennial kingdom when God’s disciplinary actions result in destroying all unbelieving Jews. Consequently, the prophet urges his fellow descendants of Abraham to take advantage of their being breathing, existing human beings and living before Jesus’ return. They must now “seek Yahweh” and “call upon Him.” Another to say this is in v. 7, “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts” before God’s patience runs out and no unbelieving Jew is allowed to live. This puts any Jewish sinner in a position to be able to “return to Yahweh” by repenting of his sin. The outcome of such actions will be that God “will have compassion on him” so that he stands to obtain eternal forgiveness and life. Indeed, “He will abundantly pardon” and forgive him, because this is just who God is—eager, ready, and willing to grant forgiveness to the Jew who seeks for it.

And God goes on in vs. to describe the moral difference between Himself and the Jews (and all human beings by extrapolation), except of course Jesus,

55:8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
 Nor are your ways My ways,” declares Yahweh.
 55:9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
 So are My ways higher than your ways
 And My thoughts than your thoughts.

Sometimes people interpret these verses as saying that it is impossible for human beings to understand God, because His “thoughts” and “ways” are those of an infinite being, while we are small, finite beings whose minds are limited in their ability to grasp the deity and eternity of God. But the context leads us in a different direction. God has just exhorted “the wicked” to repent. And why should they do so? Because His “thoughts” are morally perfect, while theirs are very much immoral. And His ways are perfectly righteous, while the wicked’s are certainly far from moral and good. Just as “the heavens are higher [spatially] than the earth,” so God’s “ways” and “thoughts” are higher morally than those of sinful Jews and other human beings. Then, in vs. 10-13, God describes a key element of this moral difference between Himself and sinners. We start with vs. 10-11,

- 55:10 “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
 And do not return there without watering the earth
 And making it bear and sprout,
 And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
 It will not return to Me empty,
 Without accomplishing what I desire,
 And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

People lie, including Jews. God does not. This is the essence of what He is saying in these verses. If God has said in Genesis 12:2 that He is going to make Abraham’s descendants a “great nation,” then He will. And nothing will stop Him, not even the very people about whom He made this promise. Indeed, not even their sin and rebellion against Him and His multiple responses of judgment and discipline can prevent Him from following through on what He has said He is going to do. I think that His statements about the Jews is ultimately what God means by “My word” in v. 11. His promises have left His mouth, traveled to Abraham and the Jews throughout the documents of the Old Testament, will continue to make its way to them through Jesus and the apostles, and eventually and finally without fail “accomplish what” God desires, so that His message succeeds “in the matter for which” He sent it.

The subject matter of God’s “word” is confirmed in vs. 12-13,

- 55:12 “For you will go out with joy
 And be led forth with peace;
 The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you,
 And all the trees of the field will clap their hands.
 55:13 “Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up,
 And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up,
 And it will be a memorial to Yahweh,
 For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.”

Again, the plural “you” here refers to Israel. God’s message regarding them will accomplish all its purposes. They will “go out with joy.” They will “be led with peace,” literally “in *shalom*.” But we realize that nothing in their past history comes close to what this is describing. Therefore, God must be referring to the restored Kingdom of Israel of Revelation 20, which in turn harkens back all the way to Genesis 12-22 and God’s initial promise, guarantee, and oath to Abraham. He will lead his Jewish descendants into a greatness unparalleled in world history when they all live in complete safety and security on the land of Israel. It will be as though the whole land shouts for joy and claps its hands, because it will become so productive that the Jews will never lack abundant food and sustenance. And this itself will be “a memorial to Yahweh,” a sign to which everyone looks and remembers that God is fulfilling His promises to them. Indeed, it will be a “an everlasting sign” which will not end. Again, the word is *‘olam*, meaning that the end will be only when God wants it to be, when He has completed the reign of Jesus on this earth, bringing an end to the usefulness of the present realm, and He moves on to the eternal heaven and earth of Revelation 21-22.

Isaiah 56:1-8

- 56:1 Thus says Yahweh,
 “Preserve justice and do righteousness (שָׁמְרוּ מִשְׁפָּט וַעֲשׂוּ צְדָקָה),
 For My salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) is about to come
 And My righteousness (צְדָקָה) to be revealed.
 56:2 “How blessed is the man who does this,
 And the son of man who takes hold of it;
 Who keeps (שָׁמַר) from profaning the sabbath,

And keeps (יִשְׁמְרֵךְ) his hand from doing any evil.”

56:3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to Yahweh say,
“Yahweh will surely separate me from His people.”
Nor let the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”

56:4 For thus says Yahweh,
“To the eunuchs who keep (יִשְׁמְרוּךְ) My sabbaths,
And choose what pleases Me,
And hold fast My covenant,

56:5 To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial,
And a name better than that of sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.

56:6 “Also the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh,
To minister to Him, and to love the name of Yahweh,
To be His servants, everyone who keeps (שְׁמַרְךָ) from profaning the sabbath
And holds fast My covenant;

56:7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;
For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples (בְּכָל-הָעַמִּים).”

56:8 Adonai Yahweh, who gathers (מְקַבֵּץ) the dispersed of Israel, declares,
“Yet others I will gather (אֶקְבֹּץ) to them, to those already gathered (לְנִקְבְּצָיו).”

In vs. 1-2 of this chapter, God is speaking to the Jews, who, we have seen, are the focus of His attention and actions on earth whereby He will remain faithful to His stated plans to give them the land of Israel, make them strong and wise, and provide them with a king who rules over them and the whole earth,

56:1 Thus says Yahweh,
“Preserve [pl.] justice and do righteousness,
For My salvation is about to come
And My righteousness to be revealed.

56:2 “How blessed is the man who does this,
And the son of man who takes hold of it;
Who keeps from profaning the sabbath,
And keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

God through the prophet urges the Jews to guard *mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט), that is, true biblical justice, and to perform *zedakah* (צְדָקָה), which is authentic obedience to God, even in the midst of being sinners who require His mercy to escape His condemnation. And this exhortation makes sense because God’s “salvation,” His *yeshu‘ah* (יְשׁוּעָה), which is Jesus’ Hebrew name, literally “is near to come,” and His *zedakah* (צְדָקָה), which is His bringing forgiveness to sinners, literally “is near to be revealed.” The question obviously is, “To whom is God speaking through Isaiah such that His salvation is so near?” One possibility is that God’s audience is Isaiah’s contemporaries and all those who might follow them in history right up to the time when the Messiah appears and establishes his kingdom over the Jews and the world. If this is the case, then God is encouraging all Jews who live from the time of the prophet to the time of the “great nation” of Israel to have hope in His keeping His promise and to pursue obedience to Him while they wait. Another possibility is that God has in mind the Jews who are living immediately before the Messiah’s appearance and his kingdom, in which case He is encouraging them to be the people of the current and ongoing “great nation.”

I am inclined to think that second option is correct, even though Isaiah delivered this prediction at least twenty-seven hundred years before its fulfillment. Certainly, any Jew who would have heard Isaiah or reads his words afterwards would be encouraged to believe that God fulfills His promises.

But it will be the people of Israel who are enduring hardship and attack by their enemies just before Jesus' return who will definitely need this same encouragement—to stay the course in their obedience in order to be “blessed” in the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. This is the same person who guards, *shomayr* (שָׁמַר) the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. For example, he will keep the Sabbath by resting every seventh day, and he will pursue genuine obedience to the covenant's moral commandments so that he avoids doing evil as much as possible.

Verses 3-8 continue God's statements to people at the time of His fulfilling His earthly promises, but the focus is no longer the nation of Israel. Instead, it is “foreigners” and “eunuchs.” Verse 3 begins this section, “Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to Yahweh say, ‘Yahweh will surely separate me from His people.’ Nor let the eunuch say, ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’” The idea is that Gentiles, who are not physically members of God's chosen people, and others, who do not consider themselves whole persons because they lack a natural and important characteristic of what they believe it means to be human, should never think that God rejects them. Just because someone is not biologically linked to Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, and just because someone, for example, is unable to participate in God's blessing of producing physical descendants of Abraham, does not mean that God cannot love them and embrace Him as people of the earthly promise. In other words, it is not their physical characteristics that make them acceptable to God. It is the spiritual characteristic of their hearts which are oriented towards Him and fundamentally desirous of obeying Him.

Therefore, Isaiah goes on in v. 4 to say, “For thus says Yahweh, ‘To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant.’” There is always a necessary condition which any sinful human must fulfill in order not to be rejected by God. As it is stated here, the person must genuinely keep and guard the Mosaic Covenant. But this seems strange to those of us who, through the teaching of the New Testament, understand the significance of Jesus as the Messiah and belief in only him for salvation. Therefore, I think that God is speaking of the restored Kingdom of Israel and *anyone who chooses to live on the land as the Jews will be doing so*. The land of Israel is so closely tied to the promise in Genesis 12:2 to make the Jews a “great nation” that when this happens, anyone, whether Jew, Gentile, or “eunuch” who chooses to dwell on the land and there worship God with a change heart, will actually be required to keep the Mosaic Covenant in the same manner as the Jews. More on this in a moment.

We saw something similar in Numbers 13 & 14 where Caleb, a Gentile, had attached himself to the tribe of Judah so that when the Israelites sent spies into the land of Canaan before they entered it, they chose him to be one of them. In other words, Caleb and the “foreigners” to whom Isaiah 56 is referring choose to become Jews through their adherence to everything Jewish as prescribed by God in the Old Testament. And, indeed, they become bona fide Jews as a result. In other words, it is not one's biological connection to Jacob which makes a human being a “descendant” of Jacob. It is his spiritual connection to the Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, et al. by being willing to submit with one's heart and mind and soul to all the “Jewish” covenants and God's plans for the Jews which does.

Notice the same kind of wording in v. 6, “Also the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh, to minister to Him, and to love the name of Yahweh, to be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant.” Added to what was said of eunuchs are three other characteristics—ministering to God, loving His name, and being His servants. Regarding ministering to God, the Greek Septuagint uses a verb that is popular with the apostle Paul, *douleuein* (δουλεύειν), meaning to be His bonds slave. To love the name of God is to be committed to Him and His project of making the Jews a “great nation” and granting eternal salvation to all those who have genuine belief like Abraham. And to be God's servant is similar to the first characteristic in that the Septuagint translates it literally “to be for Him for the purpose of bondslaves.” However, I do not think that this makes foreigners different from eunuchs in their inner commitment to God. It is simply describing the same reality in different terms. Thus, both people one group of whom are said to be not necessarily complete in what human beings can possess in regard to having children and the other who are not Jews by physical descent from Abraham can find themselves as fully accepted by God as

the Jews. But this means that God has brought about the same inner change in their hearts that demonstrates itself in authentic belief and obedience towards God.

The result in v. 5 for the eunuchs is, “To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off.” God will treat the eunuchs “better” than He would “sons and daughters,” by which I think He means as people who will participate in the “great nation” of Israel and will be granted ultimately eternal life. They will not be simply children of God. They will be full-fledged members of the nation of Israel who enjoy all of God’s blessings.

We notice, too, what God says in v. 7 of both these believing foreigners and believing eunuchs, “Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.” God’s plan for all the people of different ethnic groups and different physical ability, who join the Jews in worshiping Him in the temple in Jerusalem during the restored Kingdom of Israel, is that they, too, bring their animal sacrifices and offerings to Him there and use the time as an opportunity for prayer. As they obey the Mosaic Covenant in the same way as the Jewish believers, who actually have a national obligation to the covenant, they will demonstrate that they have genuinely changed hearts by seeking God’s mercy and forgiveness in the temple and through the sacrifices and offerings which they bring to Him. Implied is that this will be in the midst of their relying on Jesus’ advocacy for God’s mercy, not on their animal sacrifices.

Isaiah ends this passage in v. 8, “Adonai Yahweh, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, ‘Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.’” Three times this verse uses the word “gather,” the Hebrew *qavatz* (קָבַץ), *sunago* (συνάγω) in the Greek Septuagint, the latter being that from which we get our word synagogue. God speaks of “the dispersed of Israel.” These are the Jews who have been “banished” and “driven away” (*nadah* (נָדַח) in Hebrew). The Greek Septuagint uses the verb *diaspeiro* (διασπειρώ), from which we get our word dispersion. The Assyrians drove the Jews off the land of the northern Kingdom of Israel and took them into exile in 722 B.C. The Babylonians drove the Jews off the land of the southern Kingdom of Judah and took them into exile between 605 and 586 B.C. And the Romans drove the Jews off the land under their leadership between A.D. 70 and 135. In this passage of Isaiah 56, God may very well be referring to all three banishments from the land of promise. As a result, God is saying that whenever and wherever the Jews were dispersed by their enemies and made to live in other parts of the world, He will gather them back into the land at some future time when He keeps His promise and makes them a “great nation.” In addition, He will gather “others” along with them on the land. The word “others” is not actually in the Hebrew text, but it is certainly implied. Many individuals, sinful human beings who do not consider themselves worthy of being accepted by God and included in the group of His earthly “chosen people,” will eagerly attach themselves to the nation of Israel, even living with them on their land and worshiping Yahweh with them according to all the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant, which will include offerings and sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem.

Consequently, this passage, like the rest which we have examined, refers to or implies all three covenants—the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic—to which God will be faithful and keep His promises within the present realm. And He will include Gentiles and those who do not consider themselves capable of being bona fide members of the Jewish people during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus returns. These other followers of both Yahweh and Jesus the Messiah will be considered genuine members of the Jewish people, even if they do cannot trace their physical ancestry to Abraham through Jacob. According to God, a Jew is primarily a human being whose heart is properly oriented towards God and who lives on the land of Israel while being committed to the covenant of that land, the Mosaic Covenant.

Isaiah 59

[59:1](#) Behold, Yahweh's hand is not so short

- That it cannot save;
 Nor is His ear so dull
 That it cannot hear.
- 59:2 But your [pl.] iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,
 And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.
- 59:3 For your hands are defiled with blood
 And your fingers with iniquity (יָדָי);
 Your lips have spoken falsehood,
 Your tongue mutters wickedness (עוֹלָהּ).
- 59:4 No one sues righteously and no one pleads honestly.
 They trust in confusion and speak lies;
 They conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity (אֲוֵן).
- 59:5 They hatch adders' eggs and weave the spider's web;
 He who eats of their eggs dies,
 And from that which is crushed a snake breaks forth.
- 59:6 Their webs will not become clothing,
 Nor will they cover themselves with their works;
 Their works are works of iniquity (אֲוֵן),
 And an act of violence is in their hands.
- 59:7 Their feet run to evil (רָע),
 And they hasten to shed innocent blood;
 Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity (אֲוֵן),
 Devastation and destruction are in their highways.
- 59:8 They do not know the way of peace (דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלוֹם),
 And there is no justice (מִשְׁפָּט) in their tracks;
 They have made their paths crooked,
 Whoever treads on them does not know peace (שְׁלוֹם).
- 59:9 Therefore justice (מִשְׁפָּט) is far from us,
 And righteousness (צְדָקָה) does not overtake us;
 We hope for light, but behold, darkness,
 For brightness, but we walk in gloom.
- 59:10 We grope along the wall like blind men,
 We grope like those who have no eyes;
 We stumble at midday as in the twilight,
 Among those who are vigorous we are like dead men.
- 59:11 All of us growl like bears,
 And moan sadly like doves;
 We hope for justice (מִשְׁפָּט), but there is none,
 For salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), but it is far from us.
- 59:12 For our transgressions (פְּשָׁעֵינוּ) are multiplied before You,
 And our sins (וְחַטְאוֹתֵינוּ) testify against us;
 For our transgressions (פְּשָׁעֵינוּ) are with us,
 And we know our iniquities (וְעֵוֹנוֹתֵינוּ):
- 59:13 Transgressing (פָּשַׁע) and denying (וְכַחַשׁ) Yahweh,
 And turning away from our God,
 Speaking oppression and revolt,
 Conceiving in and uttering from the heart lying words.
- 59:14 Justice (מִשְׁפָּט) is turned back,
 And righteousness (צְדָקָה) stands far away;
 For truth (אֱמוּנָה) has stumbled in the street,
 And uprightness (נְכוֹנָה) cannot enter.
- 59:15 Yes, truth (הֶאֱמָנָה) is lacking;
 And he who turns aside from evil (רָע) makes himself a prey.

- Now Yahweh saw,
 And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice (בְּשֹׁפֵט).
- 59:16 And He saw that there was no man (וַיִּרְאֵ אֱלֹהִים אִישׁ),
 And was astonished that there was no one to intercede;
 Then His own arm brought salvation (וַתְּוֹשֶׁעַ) to Him,
 And His righteousness (וְצִדְקָתוֹ) upheld Him.
- 59:17 He put on righteousness (צִדְקָה) like a breastplate,
 And a helmet of salvation (וְכִבּוּעַ יְשׁוּעָה) on His head;
 And He put on garments of vengeance (גְּזָרִים) for clothing
 And wrapped Himself with zeal (קִנְיָה) as a mantle.
- 59:18 According to their deeds, so He will repay,
 Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies;
 To the coastlands He will make recompense.
- 59:19 So they will fear the name of Yahweh from the west
 And His glory from the rising of the sun,
 For He will come like a rushing stream
 Which the wind of Yahweh drives.
- 59:20 “A Redeemer (גּוֹאֲלֵל) will come to Zion,
 And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob (וּלְשׂוֹבְרֵי פְשָׁעֵי יַעֲקֹב),” declares Yahweh.
- 59:21 “As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says Yahweh: “My Spirit
 which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall
 not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring (וְיִרְעֵדָה),
 nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring (וְיִרְעֵד וְיִרְעֵד),” says Yahweh,
 “from now and forever (מִכַּעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם).”

Isaiah begins this chapter in v. 1 with a very positive statement about God, “Behold, Yahweh’s hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear.” God’s ears are always open and sensitive enough to any human being’s cry to Him for salvation. In this context, this salvation refers primarily to that of the nation of Israel from the oppression, persecution, and mistreatment they are experiencing from their earthly enemies. We always have to ask, “To which Jews is the prophet addressing himself?” Is it to his fellow Jews around 700 B.C., or to others who will live later, even at the end of the present age before or during the Messiah’s establishing the Kingdom of God on earth? The manner in which Isaiah composes the rest of the chapter leads me think that he is including himself in the group of Jews whom he is addressing. Therefore, his words are primarily for his contemporaries, but certainly all future Jews should draw instruction, rebuke, and hope from what the prophet says. The implied message of v. 1 is, if the entire nation of Israel genuinely seeks salvation from their earthly enemies, God will answer their prayer and rescue them. Also implied, I think, is that eventually this will happen according to God’s promises, guarantee, and oath to Abraham in Genesis 12-2.

However, in spite of God’s willingness to listened to the Jews’ cry for salvation, there is a problem in Israel in Isaiah’s day to which he turns and provides a long explanation in vs. 2-15a. He says first in v. 2, “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.” The sins of the Jews are accumulating to the point that God is in the process of bringing on them the curses of Deuteronomy 28. Assuming that the prophet is referring to both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah, the result will be the destruction of their cities, including Jerusalem with its temple, and the expulsion of the people from the entire land of Israel.

We know that the northern kingdom goes first in 722 B.C., and the southern kingdom follows suit around 600 B.C. Consequently, God has stopped listening to His people, and the inference is that their prayers are not coming from hearts of genuine faith, but from merely rote and memorization. This, of course, is not unlike Christians who use the same words in their liturgies week after week and

often with mindless repetition, and/or they perform their Christian church duties as nothing other than routine. Their Christianity has become merely religion instead of the living faith and obedience from a God-circumcised heart that it is supposed to be.

In Isaiah's day, the Jews' concern for religion but not for authentic obedience and worship has resulted in God's separating Himself from them. Certainly, there may be individual Jews of genuine belief and faith, but the majority of God's chosen people are only going through the motions of following the Mosaic Covenant (in the southern kingdom) or ignoring it altogether (in the northern kingdom), having created their own religion that includes pagan idolatry. And this separation will culminate in God's bringing their enemies down upon them to demolish their kingdoms and drive them off their land. But the question is, "Has God abandoned the nation of Israel completely?" As we will see later in this passage, the answer is always a permanent, "No!" God's *hesed* towards the Jews remains constant throughout their history.

For the next eleven and a half verses, Isaiah hammers away at the Israelites and their disobedience towards God. He speaks of bloodshed, lying, violence, destruction among one another, moral blindness, turning away from God and denying Him, and a complete lack of truth within their culture and society. Four times he uses the word "iniquity," once with the Hebrew word *'avon* (אָוֹן) and three times with *'aven* (אָוֵן). Twice he refers to "evil," *ra'* (רָע). He speaks of "our transgressions" (*pesha'*, פְּשָׁע) twice in one verse, and then uses the verb form, *pasha'* (פָּשַׁע), in the next verse! The phrase "our sins" (*hatta't*, חַטָּאת) is in the same verse as "our transgressions." Twice Isaiah says that the Israelites do not know "peace," i.e., *shalom* (שְׁלוֹמִים). Four times he talks about the complete lack of "justice," *mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט), among God's people. Included with this is that "righteousness," *tzedakah* (צְדָקָה), is missing too—twice. And we should notice, also, that some of the people are hoping for "salvation," *yeshu'ah* (יְשׁוּעָה), from which we get our word Jesus through the Greek transliteration *iaysous* (Ἰησοῦς). We also should take note that, by using the first plural pronouns of we, us, our, Isaiah is including himself in the predicament in which God's people find themselves. Yes, he is a genuine believer, but he is a sinner and affected by the moral darkness of his culture. While not pursuing sin himself, he will suffer God's judgment of the nation of Israel just as much as his fellow Jews.

By the time the reader finishes the first part of v. 15, he certainly should be getting the point. The Israelites are not really interested in obeying their God, and therefore He will be justified in judging and disciplining them by means of the curses of Deuteronomy 28. In fact, Jewish society has become so corrupt and anti-God that anyone who "turns aside from evil" by genuinely pursuing morality and obedience to God "makes himself a prey," i.e., the target of criticism, persecution, injustice, and mockery from those who have abandoned any notion of following God. We have seen the same thing happen during the last two thousand years to authentic Christians, who live in a manner that is counter-cultural and who are unwilling to call good evil, and evil good as those around them are doing.

Isaiah goes on in the last part of v. 15 to say, "Now Yahweh saw, and it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice." Wickedness and evil are never pleasing to God, and yet, unless He changes our hearts, we sinful human beings are unwilling to acknowledge this and its potential consequences. God is looking around at the Jewish society of Isaiah's day, and it is enveloped in injustice and all the other immoral problems of vs. 2-15a.

"And He saw that there was no man, and was astonished that there was no one to intercede; then His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness upheld Him" (v. 16). Is there anyone in Israel who is standing up for truth and morality? Is there any priest in Jerusalem who is interceding with a genuine heart of faith for God's people and appealing to Him to correct the wrongs in society, including changing the hearts Jews who are oppressing and persecuting their fellow Jews? Is there anyone who can save the Jews from their enemies whom God is bringing down on them and who will destroy both kingdoms and take the people into exile? Indeed, has there ever been a priest or king operating under the Mosaic and Davidic Covenants respectively who could accomplish these tasks of

intercession and salvation for the nation of Israel from its problems within and without? No. No sinful Jew has ever met God's requirements for being able to do so.

Fortunately, Isaiah says in this same verse, "His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness upheld Him." I would not capitalize the "H" of two uses of "him," as if this word is referring to God. I think that, in the context, Isaiah is pointing to the moral, upright, and believing Jew who has become "a prey" and object of injustice to his fellow Jews who are intent on evil, sin, and transgression. Therefore, it is God Himself who will bring salvation to anyone who is persecuted for righteousness sake. And, by means of His own righteousness, i.e., His desire to bring justification and a standing of eventually acquiring eternal forgiveness to believers, will uphold his faith. God will not allow those with authentically changed hearts to suffer for their goodness for nothing. He will definitely save them. But there is no explicit explanation of the extent of God's salvation for them. Will He rescue them from only those who are mistreating them? Or will His salvation go beyond this? By the end of the passage, we will be able to make a better guess regarding answering these question.

Verse 17 then states, "He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle." Again, ignoring the capitalization of several h's, is this verse referring only to God, or to God and the man who must protect himself from his oppressors, or only to the man? While either the second or third options make some sense, because we might think that God certainly needs no armor to defend Himself against human enemies, I think the first option is the best. These statements point to God's being the one who is arming Himself for battle against sin, evil, and all injustice. He is not a soft God, who is only loving, as we tend to think. He is loving, but He is also just and will punish sin appropriately. God is not going to stand by and let evil win in the nation of Israel and the world. He will combat it with all His might and power in order to end it and bring about "vengeance" in His "zeal."

As a result, Isaiah can say in v. 18, "According to their deeds, so He will repay, wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies; to the coastlands He will make recompense." The unjust will eventually pay the debt that they owe God's justice. And they will experience His wrath and anger, while His justice towards them will be measured and right. Thus, He will "repay...recompense [the proper wage] to His enemies." While Isaiah implies that God will pay a just wage of punishment to His enemies among the Jews, he makes it explicit that God will do the same for the Gentiles, who are the "coastlands." These are both God's and the Jews' enemies, so that the "coastlands" are representative of Israel's Gentile enemies. They will find themselves suffering the same kind of "recompense" from God for the suffering they have caused His chosen people.

Will God's threat and following through on judging the Gentiles move them to repent and be saved from His wrath and justice? The next verse only says, "So they will fear the name of Yahweh from the west and His glory from the rising of the sun, for He will come like a rushing stream which the wind of Yahweh drives" (v. 19). The Gentiles will definitely fear God, even if they do not change in their inwardness and believe in Him. God's anger, justice, and punishment are the most fearful things in existence. Therefore, eventually, "the coastlands" will "fear the name of Yahweh...and His glory" from one end of the earth to the other. We have seen, however, from other passages such as Isaiah 56 that some of the Gentiles will become authentic believers like the Jews during the latter's enjoying being the "great nation" of the God's promise in Genesis 12.

Isaiah now quotes God in v. 20, "'A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,' declares Yahweh." In this context, is God indicating that at some time in the future He will send a "man" who will be the "Redeemer" of Zion, which is to say someone who frees the nation of Israel from their earthly enemies and provides forgiveness for them at the same time? It would certainly seem so, because the prophet told us in v. 16, "And He saw that there was no man...to intercede" for His people. And this will be for the benefit of "those who turn from transgression in Jacob." God is saying that it will be the Jews who repent who benefit from the work of this "Redeemer." And this makes sense in the context because it is the Jews on whom God has set His primary attention in the midst of all the other ethnic groups in the world.

Plus, this man, Israel's Redeemer, will be involved in another covenant with them, "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says Yahweh: 'My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,' says Yahweh, 'from now and forever'" (v. 21). Who is the "you," which is singular in the Hebrew text? Isaiah? The Redeemer? Israel as a nation but addressed as if they are one, i.e., one entity? Notice that, in the previous verse, God used the plural to speak to "those who turn from transgression in" Israel and to "them" with whom is "My covenant" in v. 21. Therefore, the "you" in this latter verse is probably not the Jews collectively. This leaves as our choices Isaiah and the Redeemer. Certainly God has placed His Spirit on Isaiah. However, He has spoken of the "Redeemer" in the immediate context. Therefore, I think He is referring to the man who will free Israel from His justice, their sins, and their enemies. In history, of course, this is Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus, v. 21 is saying that Jesus himself will speak the words which God has put in his mouth, and he will never say anything but what God wants him to say. Jesus will also have "offspring," literally "seed," which is to say children who come from him. But in what sense? Again, in the context, by means of his speaking the words and the truth that both come from God. We should remember that the context is the nation of Israel. There will be Jews who respond to Jesus' words and become his children by embracing the same ideas that God is communicating through him. And there will be more Jews after them who hear their words and the truth who will also believe what they hear and thereby become the "offspring" of these Jews. God finishes this sentence by saying that this pattern will repeat itself "from now and forever," where the word "forever" is familiar to us as *'ad 'olam* (אֲדָמָה-עוֹלָם). For as long as God wants, generation after generation of Jews will hear, believe, embrace, and obey the truth which originated with the Redeemer, Jesus of Nazareth. We find out from the rest of the Bible that this ultimately will be during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus returns and restores the Davidic Kingdom of Israel. This also allows us to interpret the phrase "from now," *may'attah* (מֵעַתָּה), not as from the time of Isaiah, but from the time that the Redeemer's words become truly effective in the hearts and minds of his own ethnic group, the Jews. Again, this will at his return and God circumcises the hearts of all living Jews as He says in Deuteronomy 30.

Isaiah 60

- 60:1 "Arise, shine; for your light has come,
And the glory of Yahweh has risen upon you.
- 60:2 "For behold, darkness will cover the earth
And deep darkness the peoples;
But Yahweh will rise upon you
And His glory will appear upon you.
- 60:3 "Nations will come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising.
- 60:4 "Lift up your eyes round about and see;
They all gather together, they come to you.
Your sons will come from afar,
And your daughters will be carried in the arms.
- 60:5 "Then you will see and be radiant,
And your heart will thrill and rejoice;
Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,
The wealth of the nations will come to you.
- 60:6 "A multitude of camels will cover you,
The young camels of Midian and Ephah;
All those from Sheba will come;
They will bring gold and frankincense,
And will bear good news of the praises of Yahweh.
- 60:7 "All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you,

- The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you;
They will go up with acceptance on My altar,
And I shall glorify My glorious house.
- 60:8 "Who are these who fly like a cloud
And like the doves to their lattices?
- 60:9 "Surely the coastlands will wait for Me;
And the ships of Tarshish will come first,
To bring your sons from afar,
Their silver and their gold with them,
For the name of Yahweh your God,
And for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you.
- 60:10 "Foreigners will build up your walls,
And their kings will minister to you;
For in My wrath I struck you,
And in My favor I have had compassion on you.
- 60:11 "Your gates will be open continually;
They will not be closed day or night,
So that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations,
With their kings led in procession.
- 60:12 "For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish,
And the nations will be utterly ruined.
- 60:13 "The glory of Lebanon will come to you,
The juniper, the box tree and the cypress together,
To beautify the place of My sanctuary;
And I shall make the place of My feet glorious.
- 60:14 "The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you,
And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet;
And they will call you the city of Yahweh,
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
- 60:15 "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated
With no one passing through,
I will make you an everlasting (עוֹלָם) pride,
A joy from generation to generation.
- 60:16 "You will also suck the milk of nations
And suck the breast of kings;
Then you will know that I, Yahweh, am your Savior
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.
- 60:17 "Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
And instead of iron I will bring silver,
And instead of wood, bronze,
And instead of stones, iron.
And I will make peace (שָׁלוֹם) your administrators
And righteousness (צְדָקָה) your overseers.
- 60:18 "Violence will not be heard again in your land (בְּאַרְצְךָ),
Nor devastation or destruction within your borders;
But you will call your walls salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), and your gates praise.
- 60:19 "No longer will you have the sun for light by day,
Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;
But you will have Yahweh for an everlasting light,
And your God for your glory.
- 60:20 "Your sun will no longer set,
Nor will your moon wane;
For you will have Yahweh for an everlasting light (לְאֵזֶר עוֹלָם),
And the days of your mourning will be over.
- 60:21 "Then all your people will be righteous (צְדִיקִים);

They will possess the land forever (לְעוֹלָם יִירָשׁוּ אֶרֶץ),
 The branch of My planting,
 The work of My hands,
 That I may be glorified.

60:22 “The smallest one will become a clan,
 And the least one a mighty nation (לְגוֹי עֲצוּם).
 I, Yahweh, will hasten it in its time.”

If we read only v. 1 of Isaiah 60, we do not know exactly who the “you” is. We can guess that it is Isaiah the prophet. Or it is Israel and the Jews. Or it is the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. There is a hint as to this “person’s” identity in vs. 10 and 11. Verse 10 says that “Foreigners will build up your walls,” and v. 11 indicates, “Your gates will be continually open.” It sounds like an Ancient Near Eastern city with walls for its fortifications and gates to control who enters and leaves. Then, in v. 14 we find out, “And they will call you the city of Yahweh, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” Therefore, it is God’s city, Jerusalem, which is also called Zion. But is He addressing the physical brick and mortar, or is He speaking to the city metaphorically, as representative of the people within the city and perhaps outside it in the rest of the land of Israel? In v. 18 God says, “Violence will not be heard in your land, nor devastation or destruction within your borders.” He is speaking to the city, but He includes the entire land of Israel as that which concerns Him. And “violence” must refer to the Jews’ enemies, both within and without. In other words, it refers to people. And God states in v. 21, “Then all your people will be righteous; they will possess the land forever.” Thus, the picture that God is painting with this passage is of the city of Jerusalem in the midst of the land of Israel and all of which will contain the glory of God with His chosen people living in peace and *shalom*. And when will this happen? At the end of the present age when the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, returns to destroy Israel’s enemies, establish his kingdom on earth, and rule over the whole world.

The prophet begins his description of this future situation in v. 1, “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of Yahweh has risen upon you.” He urges Jerusalem, which is the capital city of the land promised to the Jews by God in Genesis 12:2, to rise up. The inference we can draw is that it has been brought low, even destroyed, as it was in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians and then again in A.D. 70 by the Romans. And, according to the prophets and the book of Revelation, it will also experience a great disturbance immediately before Jesus’ return. Isaiah’s command includes that it should “shine,” and this is because its “light has come, and the glory of Yahweh has risen on” it. Thus, the city will be a beacon of truth as a result of God’s displaying His own glory within it.

This will take place at a time which the prophet further describes in v. 2, “For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but Yahweh will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you.” The peoples, the *’ummeem* (אֲמֻמִּים), *ethnay* (ἔθνη) in the Greek Septuagint, of the world will be enveloped in the lies and false ideas of spiritual and moral “darkness,” having succumbed to the wiles and devious stratagems of God’s archenemy, Satan, rather than submitting to God and His truth. They will constantly be making foolish and stupid decisions. And unfortunately this will include God’s own people, the Jews, on the land of Israel and scattered throughout the world as other passages have indicated. But then something marvelous will suddenly occur. “Yahweh will rise upon” the city of Jerusalem and its people, and “His glory will appear”—in the form of the Messiah, the final king of Israel.

As a result, Isaiah says in v. 3, “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” The truth of God will affect not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles throughout the world. Not that all the Gentiles will become believers in Jesus as the Messiah, as will be the case for the entire nation of Israel, who will finally worship God on their land as He has commanded them since the Mosaic Covenant. Nevertheless, many Gentiles will be attracted to the same truth, and even some of their leaders will believe.

Isaiah continues in v. 4 to encourage Jerusalem and its people, “Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters

will be carried in the arms.” He wants them to raise their eyes to the horizons and see what is taking place as the glory of God appears in Jerusalem. Their fellow Jews, their “sons” and “daughters,” who have been living in distant lands, far away from Israel and Jerusalem, will be gathered to these indigenous Jews. They will come to them, even being helped on their journey by the Gentiles who themselves are being drawn by God in their hearts to the truth that is emanating from His city as a result of the presence of the Messiah.

And God and Isaiah describe in vs. 5-7 the effect of all this on the Jews who are receiving their distant relatives into the promised land,

- 60:5 “Then you will see and be radiant,
 And your heart will thrill and rejoice;
 Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,
 The wealth of the nations will come to you.
- 60:6 “A multitude of camels will cover you,
 The young camels of Midian and Ephah;
 All those from Sheba will come;
 They will bring gold and frankincense,
 And will bear good news of the praises of Yahweh.
- 60:7 “All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you,
 The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you;
 They will go up with acceptance on My altar,
 And I shall glorify My glorious house.

The emotional effect will be joy and happiness as not only additional Jews pour into the city and the rest of the land of Israel, but also the wealth of the nations from the rest of the world. In other words, the Gentiles, in the midst of their attraction to and embracing the same truth of God and His Messiah, will provide the nation of Israel with great wealth for their ongoing sustenance. Put in Ancient Near Eastern terms, “a multitude of camels,” bearing products of trade, will “cover” the land. These will come from Midian, Ephah, and Sheba—places outside Israel, Gentile nations, and they will include “flocks” from Kedar and “rams of Nebaioth,” both descendants of Ishmael, Isaac’s step-brother. Indeed, these Gentile people “will bear good news of the praises of Yahweh,” because they have chosen to believe and worship God as the Jews have. Then, the Jews will receive these animals and use them to present sacrifices and offerings in worship of Yahweh. And God will accept them and by means of them “glorify [His] glorious house,” the temple in Jerusalem. We remember, too, that this is all in the context of both believing Jews’ and believing Gentiles’ understanding and believing that Israel’s king, Jesus the Messiah, is their ultimate sacrifice and means to obtaining God’s mercy and forgiveness for all eternity.

God continues in v. 8, “Who are these who fly like a cloud and like the doves to their lattices?” Clouds move so freely through the sky, and doves fly uninhibited to their landing places. God is asking, what human beings are moving similarly? Certainly, it is the Jews returning to the land of Israel from around the world. No one is stopping them or slowing them down. In fact, as we have seen, the Gentiles are assisting them in their travels. God also says in v. 9, “Surely the coastlands will wait for Me; and the ships of Tarshish will come first, to bring your sons from afar, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of Yahweh your God, and for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you.” The “coastlands” refer to Gentile nations around the Mediterranean Sea and, by extrapolation in future years, to Gentiles in the rest of the world. They are now waiting on God and trusting Him through the Messiah for their well-being. In addition, ships from as far away as Spain (perhaps the meaning of the mysterious “Tarshish”) will initiate providing the Jews with transportation to the land which God has promised them through Abraham. And these returning Jews will bring with them all the wealth which God allowed them to accumulate in other parts of the earth. And all this will be in honor of God and His plans and purposes to make Israel greater than all the

Gentile nations. God will thus glorify the Jews and make them an object of wonder and awe among all the other peoples in the world.

In fact, as we saw in chapter 56, “Foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you; for in My wrath I struck you, and in My favor I have had compassion on you” (v. 10). The Gentiles and some of their leaders will become so pro-Israel that they will help fortify the walls of Jerusalem and provide the city’s inhabitants with whatever they need to live a life of *shalom*. And these events are taking place first because of God’s judgment of His people and then because of His constant faithfulness and loyalty to them in accordance with His Abrahamic promises. God periodically has caused the Jews great suffering on account of their disobedience and rejection of Him. However, this will not prevent Him from reengaging with them at the end of the present age and completing His purposes to make them a “great nation.” Because of the Abrahamic Covenant, God’s temporary anger and justice towards the Jews will change to His everlasting kindness and compassion towards them.

As I have suggested already, I think that God is referring to the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Consequently, He adds the further description of Jerusalem in v. 11, “Your gates will be open continually; they will not be closed day or night, so that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.” During the time when Israel exercises hegemony over the whole world, there will be a constant flow of the Gentiles with their leaders bringing great wealth to the city. The text is not explicit, but perhaps this flow of money and wealth into Jerusalem constitutes the freewill offerings of the Gentiles to God and His Messiah Jesus. In other words, no one is demanding that the Gentiles pay taxes, so to speak, to the government of Jesus and the Jews who rule them. In other words, this is not tribute as required by Ancient Near Eastern kings and emperors. These are gifts from the hearts of non-Jews to the Jewish God and His earthly King. Nevertheless, there will be severe consequences if the Gentiles are unwilling to show homage to God of their own freewill. “For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, and the nations will be utterly ruined” (v. 12). Any country which does not recognize the greatness and authority of the Jews under the leadership of their King, the Messiah, will find itself losing its nationhood. God does not specify exactly what it means for them to “perish,” but perhaps the words “utterly ruined” indicate that they will at least cease to exist as an autonomous country. Or perhaps their rebellious people will lose their lives, because they are demonstrating such strong rebellion against God, thus leaving only believers within their borders.

Verses 13-14 express the same theme of Israel’s greatness and the Gentiles’ submission to them,

60:13 “The glory of Lebanon will come to you,
The juniper, the box tree and the cypress together,
To beautify the place of My sanctuary;
And I shall make the place of My feet glorious.

60:14 “The sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you,
And all those who despised you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet;
And they will call you the city of Yahweh,
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

The country just to the north of the land of Israel, Lebanon, will contribute their fine wood to adorn God’s temple in Jerusalem. Thus, the place where He dwells among His people will be “glorious” and magnificent. In addition, any of the Jews’ enemies who survive God’s judgment when the Messiah arrives will bow down before the people of Jerusalem and thereby demonstrate their respect and reverence for them as the chosen people of God. And these same former enemies will acknowledge publicly that the city belongs to the one true God, who is Yahweh, the God of Israel and the Jews. And they will acknowledge the city’s name, Zion, as the very possession of God.

The radical change from ignominy and disgrace to honor and magnificence of this new Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom is also described by vs. 15-18,

- 60:15 “Whereas you have been forsaken and hated
 With no one passing through,
 I will make you an everlasting pride,
 A joy from generation to generation.
- 60:16 “You will also suck the milk of nations
 And suck the breast of kings;
 Then you will know that I, Yahweh, am your Savior
 And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.
- 60:17 “Instead of bronze I will bring gold,
 And instead of iron I will bring silver,
 And instead of wood, bronze,
 And instead of stones, iron.
 And I will make peace your administrators
 And righteousness your overseers.
- 60:18 “Violence will not be heard again in your land,
 Nor devastation or destruction within your borders;
 But you will call your walls salvation, and your gates praise.

The picture which these verses draw is one where the Jews have had to abandon their cities and their land because of their disobedience towards God. And the Gentiles who conquered them have demonstrated their hatred of Jerusalem by not respecting it as God’s city and by having destroyed it. However, having first brought the curses of Deuteronomy 28 on the Jews’ and Jerusalem, God will complete His purposes by granting them the blessings of the same chapter and Deuteronomy 30. He will make Jerusalem “an everlasting pride” so that the Jews will rejoice over it and in it “from generation to generation,” i.e., throughout the entire millennial kingdom. And the Jewish people, living on the land and practicing genuine worship of God from changed hearts, will attract the wealth and available sustenance from all the other countries around the world. Even these countries’ leaders will gladly supply Israel with whatever they need to live a life of *shalom*.

Because of all this, the Jews will have clear and incontrovertible evidence that God is their Savior, who has freed them from their enemies and any suffering that they would want to perpetrate on them. And this is because God is the “Mighty One,” who is dedicated to Jacob and his descendants, the people of Israel. The Jews may have experienced relative wealth up to this point (bronze, iron, wood, and stones), but now they will accumulate fabulous riches (gold, silver, bronze, and iron respectively). Plus, instead of corrupt sinful leaders, either from within their own community, such as the kings of the northern Kingdom of Israel in Isaiah’s day, or who are a Gentile government in authority over them, such as the emperors and governors of the Roman Empire in Jesus’ day, the nation of Israel will be ruled by *shalom* and righteousness. Of course, this will be because Jesus, their permanent king, will rule them as the very embodiment of God’s moral purity power, and authority. Besides this, the Jews themselves will fundamentally and genuinely long for moral goodness as a result of their hearts, which have been changed by the Spirit of God and permanently oriented towards God.

The result in v. 18 of *shalom* and righteousness ruling the Jews will be that no one will ever enter their land to harm them, and they themselves will not mistreat or do any violence towards each other. This will mean, also, that the walls and gates of Jerusalem will not have to serve as defenses against their earthly enemies. Instead, they will represent the salvation which God has brought to them and their own praise and worship of Him in return. There will truly be peace throughout the land of the Jews as they finally obey God as He has always required but not caused until this time when He changes the inwardness of every living Jew. And having the Messiah govern and rule them, with his morally perfect and divinely mandated power and authority, will result in only a peaceful environment. No empire, nation, or country has ever had governmental leaders who have exercised

their authority with complete righteousness and an effectiveness that has resulted in permanent and constant safety and well-being for their citizens. Jesus will be the first (and last) ruler to do so.

Isaiah continues describing God's benefits to Jerusalem and the Jews in vs. 19-20,

60:19 "No longer will you have the sun for light by day,
Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;
But you will have Yahweh for an everlasting light,
And your God for your glory.

60:20 "Your sun will no longer set,
Nor will your moon wane;
For you will have Yahweh for an everlasting light,
And the days of your mourning will be over.

Four times the prophet uses the word "light" in these two verses. It sounds as though the land of Israel and the Jews will no longer experience the cycles of day and night following one another. Instead, they will live in permanent light, and it will always be day. But this does not make sense in that the millennial kingdom will be a continuation of the present realm where night follows day and day follows night, because this is the way God has designed the natural world with the earth's revolving every twenty-four hours. Therefore, Isaiah is speaking metaphorically of the "brightness" of God's truth and glorious actions towards the nation of Israel. These will overshadow everything anything that the Jews will experience. In this sense, their "sun will no longer set" such that they would be surrounded by the darkness of their sin, resulting in God's disciplining them by sending their enemies to destroy their cities and drive them off the land. All their past "mourning" on account of suffering at the hands of their enemies will finally come to an end. Yahweh will never cease to be their protector and ruler, and their Messiah and king will ensure that no one will be able to harm them again.

Isaiah finishes this passage in vs. 21-22 with a summary of all the great things which are in store for the Jews,

60:21 "Then all your people will be righteous;
They will possess the land forever,
The branch of My planting,
The work of My hands,
That I may be glorified.

60:22 "The smallest one will become a clan,
And the least one a mighty nation.
I, Yahweh, will hasten it in its time."

Every single Jew will become *tzaddeeq*, צַדִּיק, in Hebrew or *dikaios*, δίκαιος, in Greek, having been inwardly changed by God and now living on the land of Israel as an authentic believer in God and His Messiah, Jesus. Therefore, all the Jews will be a nation of Christians, who will enjoy the perpetual and unwavering *shalom* of the millennial kingdom on this earth and ultimately eternal life on the new earth of Revelation 21. They will also "possess the land [of Israel] forever" (*le'olam*), during the remaining time of the existence of their nation as separate from all the Gentile nations, which will be during the Messiah's rule over them and the world. They will be the "branch" which God has planted on the earth and in the earth of the land of Israel. In this way, they will be the "work" of His hands, of His eternal purposes where He has always planned to glorify Himself by demonstrating His love, faithfulness, grace, mercy, forgiveness, goodness, and power through them in the present realm. Throughout the generations of Jews who live during this time, each of them as a member of the "great nation" of Genesis 12 will be as if he is a "clan" and "mighty nation," because they will all participate in the greatness of Israel, ruling the world with their Messiah.

And God says that, once He starts the process of bringing about the fulfillment of His desires and promises, He will do so quickly and completely. “I will hasten it in its time,” He declares. Nothing will hinder Him from beginning the process when He decides it is the right moment, and nothing will slow Him down from finishing the process of making Abraham’s descendants’ the most powerful people in history according to the Abrahamic Covenant and with the final king of the Davidic Covenant, the Messiah.

Isaiah 61

- 61:1 The Spirit of Adonai Yahweh is upon me,
Because Yahweh has anointed (מָשַׁח) me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;
- 61:2 To proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,
- 61:3 To grant those who mourn in Zion,
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of Yahweh, that He may be glorified.
- 61:4 Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,
They will raise up the former devastations;
And they will repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.
- 61:5 Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks,
And foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.
- 61:6 But you will be called the priests of Yahweh;
You will be spoken of as ministers of our God.
You will eat the wealth of nations,
And in their riches you will boast.
- 61:7 Instead of your shame you will have a double portion,
And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion.
Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land,
Everlasting joy will be theirs.
- 61:8 For I, Yahweh, love justice (בְּיִשְׁפָּט),
I hate robbery in the burnt offering;
And I will faithfully give them their recompense
And make an everlasting covenant (וּבְרִית עוֹלָם) with them.
- 61:9 Then their offspring (וְזַרְעָם) will be known among the nations,
And their descendants (וְצִאצְאֵיהֶם) in the midst of the peoples.
All who see them will recognize them
Because they are the offspring whom Yahweh has blessed (הֵם זַרְע בְּרַךְ יְהוָה).
- 61:10 I will rejoice greatly in Yahweh,
My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation (יִשׁוּעַ),
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness (צְדָקָה),
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- 61:11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up,

So Adonai Yahweh will cause righteousness and praise
To spring up before all the nations (קָלַלְהֶגּוֹיִם).

We have another important question to ask at the beginning of this chapter, “Who is speaking?” It is most likely an individual. We can tell by the singular pronoun “me” in the first line. While the singular could refer to a group such as the nation of Israel, where they are united as one entity, it does seem better in the light of the rest of the passage to think of the speaker as one person. Could it be Isaiah, so that he is describing his immediate situation? Or is it someone in the future, and Isaiah is speaking and writing on his behalf? We know in Luke’s gospel that Jesus quotes vs. 1-2a as his first public words in the synagogue of his hometown Nazareth (cf. Luke 4:14-30), and he tells the people, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Therefore, should we conclude that Isaiah is referring specifically to the coming Messiah, the final Davidic king of the “great nation” of Israel, to Jesus himself? This does seem to be the most reasonable way to understand him.

Thus, the prophet indicates first of the Messiah in v. 1,

61:1 The Spirit of Adonai Yahweh is upon me,
Because Yahweh has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;

61:2 To proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh.

When Jesus arrives on the scene in Israel, God will make him a unique and special human being, because His “Spirit” will be “upon” him. It is not as though God’s Spirit has not been involved in other people’s lives in Israel. For example, we are told in Judges 6:34, “So the Spirit of Yahweh came upon Gideon; and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him.” And there are many more instances of the Spirit’s coming upon individuals in the Old Testament. But the speaker in Isaiah 61 also says, “Yahweh has anointed me.” The Hebrew verb here is *mashah* (מָשַׁח), and the noun form is *masheeah* (מָשִׁיחַ), i.e., messiah. Thus, he is stating that God has chosen him for a special role within Israel (and within the world, as we will see in a moment). I think that the speaker is saying, “I am unequivocally and uniquely *the* Messiah who will be the permanent king of the nation of Israel.”

Granted, this person could be any king, priest, or prophet of Israel, because all those who performed these roles were anointed with oil and thereby became Jewish Messiahs. But the description in this passage of the speaker is clearly that of the final king. He indicates that his role and purpose is “to bring good news to the afflicted. . . , to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to the prisoners.” We can easily interpret all these kinds of people as Jews who have suffered under God’s judgment and disciplinary actions as we have seen in previous passages. Their enemies have oppressed them, broken their hearts over the destruction on the land of Israel they have caused, and made them their captives, slaves, and prisoners in Assyrian, Babylon, Rome, and other countries down through the centuries. And who is going to redeem and free them from all this suffering? Their champion, the Messiah and final Davidic king who will restore the Kingdom of Israel, destroy their enemies, and protect them from any threats and harm for the duration of his rule over them on the present earth. No wonder Jesus’s purpose in the synagogue was “to proclaim the favorable year of Yahweh,” to predict that with his arrival, he was headed towards his return when he would accomplish all this—after first suffering death on the cross in order to qualify for fulfilling the rest of God’s purposes.

But Jesus did not quote the next line of v. 2, “[to proclaim] the day of vengeance of our God.” Was this because he did not want to mention the fact that the Jews would continue to experience God’s judgment and discipline? Or was it because this line refers to God’s vengeance on the Gentiles,

and therefore it is understood that this is what God would bring during His “favorable year?” I think that it is the former, which Malachi 4:5 calls “The Great and Terrible Day of Yahweh,” that period of time immediately before the return of Jesus which will constitute God’s final discipline of His chosen people for their disobedience. It, too, is certainly understood in what the previous lines of vs. 1-2 describe, and this fits with the last line of v. 2, “to comfort all who mourn.” It has been and will be the Jews who mourn over their mistreatment at the hands of their enemies during the last twenty-seven hundred years and in the future immediately before Jesus’ return. But fortunately God’s final discipline of them will not prove to be their complete disappearance. Instead, He will comfort those who survive after they have mourned the various ways that the collection of Gentile nations and their leader, the Man of Lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2, wreak havoc on their land (cf. Isaiah 40; Revelation 17-20). And their greatest comfort will be their king’s rescuing them and ushering them into his new kingdom which he establishes.

The Messiah further describes this transition in v. 3,

61:3 To grant those who mourn in Zion,
 Giving them a garland instead of ashes,
 The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
 The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
 So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
 The planting of Yahweh, that He may be glorified.

To summarize this verse, God will plant the Jews in the land which He promised them through Abraham in Genesis 12 so that they will be like oaks, firm and permanent, with hearts of authentic belief. And they will be justified before God, having obtained a position whereby they stand to inherit not only the millennial kingdom, but also eternal life. Plus, they will pursue righteousness and moral purity according to the Mosaic Covenant and Jesus’ own commandments to love one another, while experiencing the joy of salvation from their enemies. And they will praise God as their worship of Him flows from their hearts and minds with thanksgiving for all the great things He has done for them. And God has always planned to glorify Himself in this way, so that His faithfulness, goodness and power are clearly seen by the Jews and the rest of the world.

Verses 4-6 continue this theme of great benefit for the Jews,

61:4 Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,
 They will raise up the former devastations;
 And they will repair the ruined cities,
 The desolations of many generations.
 61:5 Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks,
 And foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.
 61:6 But you will be called the priests of Yahweh;
 You will be spoken of as ministers of our God.
 You will eat the wealth of nations,
 And in their riches you will boast.

Any destruction that their enemies have caused on the land by the time the Messiah makes his appearance to restore the Kingdom of Israel will be reversed by the Jews when they “rebuild the ancient ruins,” especially those of Jerusalem. It will not matter how long things have remained in bad shape or when they were destroyed. By referring to “the ancient ruins” and “the former devastations,” the Messiah, I think, is saying there will never again be damaged buildings on the land of Israel. The Jews will make their country look as though the Assyrians, Babylonians, Romans, and Beast of Revelation never invaded their country.

In addition, as we have seen in previous passages, Gentiles will join them and assist them in caring for the production of food and services. In Exodus 19, God called the Israelites “a kingdom of

priests,” meaning that He intended them to stand between Him and the rest of the world and teach them to obey Him. However, they have never fully done so. But this will change when the Messiah returns and, according to Deuteronomy 30, God circumcises all their hearts so that they believe and understand Him properly in order to educate the Gentiles. In this way, they will serve the other peoples of the world. And the peoples of the world will respond with authentic faith to the message which the Jews proclaim and that emanates from Jesus, Jerusalem, and the land of Israel. However, not all the Gentiles will embrace biblical truth. But many of them will become genuine believers who will gladly share their riches with Israel to support them and to demonstrate by it their worship of God and Jesus. Thus, when the Gentiles make this grand and generous gesture of assistance to them, Israel will “boast,” that is, humbly celebrate their own role in history and in the world as the chosen people of God.

As verse 7 goes on to indicate, “Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, and instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, everlasting joy will be theirs.” The Jews have experienced a tremendous amount of mistreatment and humiliation during their history. Consider, for example, all the men, women, and children who were marched naked into the gas chambers by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Consider also the Jews with their families whom various countries have expelled from their homes and forced to move to other places on earth, even half way around the globe. Consider the pogroms of the Soviet Union, when entire Jewish villages were annihilated. Consider the Palestinian Liberation Organization’s charter which states explicitly that their goal is to exterminate the Jews of Israel, which has resulted in attack after attack on God’s chosen people, the descendants of Abraham through Jacob in the state of Israel. But when Jesus returns, the Jews will receive a “double portion” of joy and excitement for the greatness which God will grant them in the world. They will enjoy a status far above all the other nations with the power, authority, and goodness by which they exercise hegemony over the Gentiles for the remainder of the present realm.

The next two verses are potentially a little confusing because of the word “recompense,”

61:8 For I, Yahweh, love justice,
I hate robbery in the burnt offering;
And I will faithfully give them their recompense
And make an everlasting covenant (וּבְרִית עוֹלָם) with them.

61:9 Then their offspring (וְיָרְשָׁם) will be known among the nations,
And their descendants (וְיִצְאָצְאֵיהֶם) in the midst of the peoples.
All who see them will recognize them
Because they are the offspring whom Yahweh has blessed (הֵם יֵרַע בְּרַךְ יְהוָה).

First, we notice that the speaker has changed from the human Messiah to Yahweh, the transcendent Creator of all reality. But this makes sense that God is implying that He is the one who is bringing about all the wonderful things which the Messiah is claiming in regard to the Jews. He loves “justice,” *mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט), and hates the “robbery” perpetrated on the Jews and which has come from either their withholding the proper Mosaic Covenant offerings and sacrifices from Him or their performing them without authentic faith. This, of course, is highly instructive for all people who think that they are worshiping the one, true God. The question they need to ask themselves is, are they doing so merely by their actions, or are their actions based upon hearts of genuine belief? Clearly, the latter is the only worship which God accepts and is pleasing to Him.

Then God says that He will “faithfully give them their recompense.” Does He mean that He will pay back the disobedience and unfaithful Jews with condemnation and destruction? This seems to make sense in the light of the first two lines of the verse. Yet, the last line indicates that God will “make an everlasting (*olam*) covenant with them.” On the one hand, it could be that God will discipline the disobedient Jews and pay them back for their unfaithfulness. On the other hand, He may mean that He will follow through on His promise to Abraham and “pay back” his descendants by

making them a “great nation.” And this payback will involve another “covenant,” what Jeremiah 31:31-34 will label as a “New Covenant.” I am inclined to take God’s presenting the Jews with “their recompense” as referring to the first option—that He will exercise true justice and punish them for their disobedience.

Nevertheless, the descendants of the Jews who have disobeyed God “will be known among the nations.” Indeed, “all who see them will recognize them” as the chosen people of God. And how will this happen? By means of Israel’s being the “blessed” among all the peoples when every Jew will have a changed heart, authentic faith, and complete safety and security from their enemies on the promised land of Genesis 12:1-2. In addition, the Jews will enjoy this condition as a people for generation after generation, i.e., for as long as the renewed and restored Kingdom of Israel endures.

Our passage here in Isaiah 61 ends with the Messiah speaking again,

61:10 I will rejoice greatly in Yahweh,
My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
61:11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up,
So Adonai Yahweh will cause righteousness and praise
To spring up before all the nations.

The Messiah rejoices and exults in God, because He “has clothed [him] with garments of salvation [*yesha* ‘ (עֲשֵׂה)],” and “He has wrapped [him] with a robe of righteousness [*tzedakah* (צְדָקָה)].” This sounds as though the Messiah needs salvation just as the other *sinful* Jews do. But there are two legitimate options for understanding what he means. Either his clothes are a metaphor for what God provides him, salvation from his enemies and perfect righteousness as his moral character. Or they represent his role as the one who brings salvation and justification to sinners, especially, in the immediate context, to Jewish sinners. I think that he means the second option, his role, which will result in what he goes on to describe in v. 11, “righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.” By virtue of the Messiah’s suffering and death (as explained in Isaiah 53), he becomes God’s instrument of salvation and justification for the Jewish people, so that their good works and praise of God from their changed hearts is made visible to the eyes of “all the nations.” And perhaps the implication is that some of the Gentiles in the rest of the world will embrace the same salvation through the Messiah that all the Jews have. In other words, Jesus will bring not only salvation for the Jews from their earthly enemies, but he will bring the kind of salvation and justification for them and the Gentiles which will eventually result in eternal life for all authentic believers. In this way, God will keep both promises that He made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, to make the Jews a “great nation” and to grant all Abraham-like believers eternal life.

Isaiah 62

62:1 For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,
And for Jerusalem’s sake I will not keep quiet,
Until her righteousness (צְדָקָה) goes forth like brightness,
And her salvation (יִשׁוּעָהּ) like a torch that is burning.
62:2 The nations will see your righteousness,
And all kings your glory;
And you will be called by a new name
Which the mouth of Yahweh will designate.
62:3 You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Yahweh,

- And a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
- 62:4 It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken,"
Nor to your land (וְלֵאמֹר) will it any longer be said, "Desolate";
But you will be called, "My delight is in her (הִפְצִי-בָּהּ),"
And your land (וְלֵאמֹר), "Married";
For Yahweh delights in you,
And to Him your land (וְאֵרְבָּה) will be married.
- 62:5 For as a young man marries a virgin,
So your sons will marry you;
And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So your God will rejoice over you.
- 62:6 On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen;
All day and all night they will never keep silent.
You who remind Yahweh, take no rest for yourselves;
- 62:7 And give Him no rest until He establishes
And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.
- 62:8 Yahweh has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm,
"I will never again give your grain as food for your enemies;
Nor will foreigners drink your new wine for which you have labored."
- 62:9 But those who garner it will eat it and praise Yahweh;
And those who gather it will drink it in the courts of My sanctuary.
- 62:10 Go through, go through the gates,
Clear the way for the people;
Build up, build up the highway,
Remove the stones, lift up a standard over the peoples.
- 62:11 Behold, Yahweh has proclaimed to the end of the earth (אֶל-קֵצֵה הָאָרֶץ),
Say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes;
Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him."
- 62:12 And they will call them, "The holy people,
The redeemed of Yahweh";
And you will be called, "Sought out, a city not forsaken."

The person speaking in this chapter may very well be Isaiah. He has heard God refer to His plans to make Israel a "great nation" with their Messiah ruling over them after he has suffered for their sins. Now, he proclaims a message of encouragement from God that is his message too. He begins in v. 1, "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet, until her righteousness goes forth like brightness, and her salvation like a torch that is burning." If it were possible for Isaiah to survive until God fulfills all His promises to the Jews, he would keep speaking about Zion, which, as a result of the parallelism, is Jerusalem. He looks forward to when the city's inhabitants are righteous, justified, and rescued from all their earthly enemies by virtue of their faith in God. This is probably especially prominent in Isaiah's mind because of the upcoming Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of the land of Israel, which he has predicted.

But when God finally brings permanent salvation to Jerusalem and her people, "The nations will see your righteousness, and all kings your glory; and you will be called by a new name which the mouth of Yahweh will designate" (v. 2). The entire world will know that God has acted to glorify Himself and His chosen people when He completes His plans for them in the present realm. They will become the "great nation" of Genesis 12, and all the Gentiles will observe how faithful to God all the Jews have become. They will believe in not only Him, but also His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who will have returned to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. In addition, God will give the city a new name, which the prophet does not reveal, because only God will do so when these events occur in the future.

Isaiah continues his praise of Jerusalem in vs. 3-4,

- 62:3 You will also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Yahweh,
And a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
- 62:4 It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken,"
Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate";
But you will be called, "My delight is in her,"
And your land, "Married";
For Yahweh delights in you,
And to Him your land will be married.

The land of Israel is just as important in God's mind as His city Jerusalem. And when He brings about all the blessings for it which He has said will occur, no one will be able to say any longer that God is nowhere to be found in the city. Indeed, it will be like a royal "crown of beauty" in His hand, because it will be from there that the Messiah will rule the Jews and the rest of the world. Nor will the land be without its proper inhabitants, the Jews, which has often been the case during their history as a result of God's disciplinary actions by which they were driven off the land. The difference will be that God will permanently delight in Jerusalem and all the land which He promised Abraham's descendants. The inference, which Isaiah will state explicitly in the next verse, is that, for the first time in human history, the people of the land, the Jews, will all have hearts of authentic faith and obedience towards God. As a bride marries her fiancé and they become wife and husband, the land and its people will be wedded to Yahweh so that they are inseparable for as long as the restored Kingdom of Israel lasts in the present realm.

Thus, Isaiah mentions in v. 5 a second marriage, "For as a young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you." The "sons" are the Jewish people. They too will "marry" Jerusalem as if she is a virgin and has never suffered destruction or abandonment by her Jewish inhabitants. I think the point which Isaiah is making by likening Jerusalem to a virgin is that never again will the city and its people endure God's judgment and discipline. This will be because the Jews will commit themselves from their hearts to obeying and worshiping God within her and His temple there. And, to repeat, God will become the city's husband, so that He too will remain faithful to it, to protect its buildings and sustain its people for as long as the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 endures.

Then Isaiah speaks in vs. 6-7 of something which either God will definitely perform or that he would wish would happen in the light of Jerusalem's divine destiny,

- 62:6 On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen;
All day and all night they will never keep silent.
You who remind Yahweh, take no rest for yourselves;
- 62:7 And give Him no rest until He establishes
And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Isaiah's hope and expectation is that God's faithfulness to His people and to the city, which is His and their capital in the land of Israel, will include His placing Jews metaphorically on the walls of the city. These men will be appointed as "watchmen," so that "all day and all night they will never keep silent" as they "remind Yahweh" of His promise in Genesis 12:2 to make Israel a "great nation." They are to "take no rest" for themselves and give God "no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth." In other words, Isaiah's desire is that God's chosen people never stop praying for Jerusalem and its becoming the center of the earth and its people.

Just as David says in Psalm 122:6-9,

- Psalm 122:6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May they prosper who love you.
- 122:7 "May peace be within your walls,
And prosperity within your palaces."

122:8 For the sake of my brothers and my friends,
I will now say, "May peace be within you."

122:9 For the sake of the house of Yahweh our God,
I will seek your good.

This will all happen when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel to set up his rule over the entire world. Jerusalem will become the capital city of not only Israel, but also all the Gentile nations. They may have their own local capitals and national leaders, but Jesus and his city, Jerusalem, will be their main capital for the duration of the millennial kingdom. Thus, all the nations will "praise" and honor Jerusalem and the Jews as the most important place and people on earth.

Isaiah continues in vs. 8-9 with another statement of God's constant and perpetual faithfulness to the Jewish people,

62:8 Yahweh has sworn by His right hand and by His strong arm,
"I will never again give your grain as food for your enemies;
Nor will foreigners drink your new wine for which you have labored."

62:9 But those who garner it will eat it and praise Yahweh;
And those who gather it will drink it in the courts of My sanctuary.

When did God swear according to His transcendent strength and power that Israel's enemies would never take from them their food and wine which they have worked so hard to cultivate? It was implied in His promise, guarantee, and oath to Abraham in Genesis 12, 15, and 22 respectively to make his descendants the most honored and powerful nation in human history. And we have seen that God has continued to swear this oath throughout the rest of the Bible, even in the prophets starting here in Isaiah. Instead of their enemies eating their food and drinking their wine, the millennial kingdom Jews will collect them at harvest time and partake of them while they "praise Yahweh" for His faithfulness and provision. And they will even bring it to His "sanctuary," the temple, and enjoy it there as they worship God with unceasing joy in their hearts.

Isaiah finishes this passage in vs. 10-12 with a strong exhortation to the Jews of history to proclaim the good news of God's faithfulness to them because eventually they will experience it to its fullest, and the whole world will know it,

62:10 Go through, go through the gates,
Clear the way for the people;
Build up, build up the highway,
Remove the stones, lift up a standard over the peoples.

62:11 Behold, Yahweh has proclaimed to the end of the earth (אֶל-קְצֵה הָאָרֶץ),
Say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes;
Behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him."

62:12 And they will call them, "The holy people,
The redeemed of Yahweh";
And you will be called, "Sought out, a city not forsaken."

Isaiah wants whoever is living in Jerusalem in his day (and anytime afterwards when the city actually exists and has not been destroyed by Israel's enemies) to leave the city gates and do whatever is necessary to repair the roads and highways leading to it so that their "people," their fellow Jews, who will be driven from the land by the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions (and any other enemy invasion afterwards), may easily return and enter the city. Any stones that might be an impediment to anyone walking on this road they are to "remove." And while they are outside the city and mending all the highways of the land, they are to proclaim the good news of God's blessing and mercy to them, which any Gentile can also enjoy by believing in and worshiping the one, true God. Thus, they will "lift up a standard over [all] the peoples" of the world and teach them the truth about God. The

inference is that God will repair the Jews' hearts so that they genuinely believe and obey him which, in turn, makes their repairs of Israel's roads a project of authentic faith.

Further encouragement for the Jews to engage in this activity is in the words of v. 11, "Behold, Yahweh has proclaimed to the end of the earth, say to the daughter of Zion, 'Lo, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.'" God has said over and over that He will rescue His chosen people from their enemies, so that the latter will receive their wage, which they deserve, of condemnation and destruction while the former will receive their "wage," which comes only by God's undeserved grace, of being saved from their enemies and given a life of *shalom* on the land of Israel.

As a result, according to v. 12, Israel's enemies will have to admit that they are "The holy people" of God, those whom He has "redeemed" and freed from them! And the Gentiles who actually become believers like the Jews will think of Jerusalem as a place to be "sought out." They will travel to it and worship God and His Messiah with the Jews. Jerusalem will become the best vacation spot in the world for those of genuine faith. No other place on earth—not Hawaii, not the Rocky Mountains, not the lakes of Minnesota, not Florida and its beaches, not anywhere else in the world—will be as enjoyable as Israel and especially Jerusalem for Gentiles who authentically believe in God and Jesus, His Messiah. And the whole world will recognize that God will never again abandon and destroy Jerusalem and drive the Jews off the land which He has given to them. He will remain faithful to all that He meant in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic Covenants—because this is just who God is!

Isaiah 65

65:1 "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me;
I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.

I said, 'Here am I, here am I,'

To a nation which did not call on My name.

65:2 "I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people,
Who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts (אָחַר מִתְּשַׁבְּתֵיהֶם),

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

65:4 Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places;
Who eat swine's flesh,
And the broth of unclean meat is in their pots.

65:5 "Who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me,
For I am holier than you!
These are smoke in My nostrils,
A fire that burns all the day.

65:6 "Behold, it is written before Me,
I will not keep silent, but I will repay (שָׁלַחְתִּי) (ἀποδοῦ);
I will even repay into their bosom,

65:7 Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together," says Yahweh.
"Because they have burned incense on the mountains
And scorned Me on the hills,
Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom."

65:8 Thus says Yahweh,
"As the new wine is found in the cluster,
And one says, 'Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,'
So I will act on behalf of My servants
In order not to destroy all of them.

65:9 "I will bring forth offspring from Jacob (וְהוֹצֵאתִי מִיַּעֲקֹב יָרֵעַ),
And an heir of My mountains from Judah;
Even My chosen ones shall inherit it,

- And My servants will dwell there.
- 65:10 "Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks,
And the valley of Achor a resting place for herds,
For My people who seek Me.
- 65:11 "But you who forsake Yahweh,
Who forget My holy mountain,
Who set a table for Fortune,
And who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny,
- 65:12 I will destine you for the sword,
And all of you will bow down to the slaughter.
Because I called, but you did not answer;
I spoke, but you did not hear.
And you did evil in My sight
And chose that in which I did not delight."
- 65:13 Therefore, thus says Adonai Yahweh,
"Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry.
Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty.
Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame.
- 65:14 "Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart,
But you will cry out with a heavy heart,
And you will wail with a broken spirit.
- 65:15 "You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones,
And Adonai Yahweh will slay you.
But My servants will be called by another name.
- 65:16 "Because he who is blessed in the earth (תִּמְתַּכְּבֹּרֶךְ בְּאֶרֶץ)
Will be blessed (יִתְבָּרֶכֶךְ) by the God of truth;
And he who swears in the earth
Will swear by the God of truth;
Because the former troubles are forgotten,
And because they are hidden from My sight!
- 65:17 "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.
- 65:18 "But be glad and rejoice forever (עַד־עַד) in what I create;
For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing
And her people for gladness.
- 65:19 "I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people;
And there will no longer be heard in her
The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.
- 65:20 "No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,
Or an old man who does not live out his days;
For the youth will die at the age of one hundred
And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred
Will be thought accursed.
- 65:21 "They will build houses and inhabit them;
They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
- 65:22 "They will not build and another inhabit,
They will not plant and another eat;
For as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people,
And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.
- 65:23 "They will not labor in vain,
Or bear children for calamity (לְבָהֳלָה);
For they are the offspring of those blessed by Yahweh (זֵרַע בְּרוּכֵי יְהוָה הַמְּמַחֵה),
And their descendants with them (וְנִצְאָצְאֵיהֶם אִתָּם).
- 65:24 "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking,
I will hear.

65:25 “The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,” says Yahweh.

There are two options for understanding v. 1 in relation to vs. 2-5,

- 1) Verse 1 refers to Gentiles, who initially are not interested in God but then become authentic believers in Him, while vs. 2-5 refer to Jews who consistently rebel against God.
- 2) Verses 1-5 refer to Jews who consistently rebel against God, but eventually some of them become authentic believers in God.

We should remember that language is flexible enough that the text could mean either #1 or #2. For example, another English Bible, the Complete Jewish Bible, translates the verses,

Is. 65:1 “I made myself accessible
to those who didn’t ask for me,
I let myself be found
by those who didn’t seek me.
I said, ‘Here I am! Here I am!’
to a nation not called by My name.
Is. 65:2 I spread out My hands all day long
to a rebellious people
who live in a way that is not good,
who follow their own inclinations.

Notice the one key difference between the CJB and the NAS95 which I first quoted above. The NAS95 translates the last line of v. 1, “To a nation *which did not call* on My Name,” while the CJB translates it, “To a nation *not called* by My name” (emphases mine). In the NAS95, the verb is in the active voice. In the CJB, it is passive. If the verb is active, then the nation which has not called on God’s name could be either the Jews or the Gentiles, or both. If the verb is passive, then the nation which is not called by God’s name and, therefore, which does not belong to God could only be the Gentiles. This would also allow for the word *goy* (גוי), “nation,” to be translated as people.

I think that interpretation #1 is correct because of the verb in the last line of v. 1. It is the Hebrew word *qora*’ (קָרָא), which is a Pual form. The Pual is typically translated as passive, so that the Complete Jewish Bible is correct, “to a nation not called by My name.” However, to be fair to the NAS95, the Greek Septuagint, interestingly enough, translates the verb as active, rendering the last line, “to a nation which did not call on My name.” The original Hebrew text did not have any vowels, so that, with different vowels, the word *qora*’ could be *qoray*, which is the Qal active participle. This must be the way the Septuagint has interpreted the verb.

To help with figuring out the correct interpretation, we can look at the apostle Paul’s use of these verses in Romans 10:19-21

Romans 10:19 But I say, surely Israel did not know, did they? First Moses says,
“I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation. By a nation without understanding will I anger you.”
10:20 And Isaiah is very bold and says,
“I was found by those who did not seek Me. I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me.”
10:21 But as for Israel He says, “All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

In Romans 9-11, Paul is explaining that not all Jews are bona fide members of the nation of Israel. During the course of history, only a relatively few who authentic faith can expect to participate in the fulfillment of God’s promise of making the Jews a “great nation.” Plus, it is not only Jews who

will enjoy the promises of God. Many Gentiles will also. In the verses of chapter 10 above, we can see that Paul first says that, around 1500 B.C., Moses declares to the Israelites that God is going to make them jealous by granting genuine faith to a “nation,” a group of people, who have lacked a proper understanding of Him. These people, of course, must be Gentiles, and the Jews whom they are intended to make jealous are obviously those who lack genuine faith. Then, Paul quotes our two verses under consideration, Isaiah 65:1-2. He states that “Isaiah is very bold and says, ‘I [God] was found by those who did not seek Me. I became manifest to those who did not ask for Me’” (cf. Isaiah 65:1). The flow of Paul’s argument shows that he understands God to be speaking of the Gentiles, the very ones who, because of their authentic belief in God, will make unbelieving Jews jealous. Next, Paul includes Isaiah 65:2, “But as **for Israel** [God] says, ‘All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people’” (emphasis mine).

Clearly, Paul interprets Isaiah 65:1 as God’s referring to Gentiles, and then He turns His attention to the Jews in v. 2. Therefore, my option #1 above is correct. Verse 1 refers to Gentiles, who initially are not interested in God but then become authentic believers in Him, while vs. 2-5 refer to Jews who consistently rebel against Him. God is stating that a group of people who were not even considering worshiping Him as their God, the Gentiles, are actually going to do just this. He will say to the Gentiles, who are not called by His name, i.e., who are not the chosen people of Yahweh, “Here I am, here I am!” And they will respond with authentic belief and obedience. Or, if the Greek Septuagint is the correct translation, then God will say to the Gentiles, who do not call on His name, because they are currently committed to worshiping other gods, “Here I am, here I am!” And, again, they will respond with authentic belief and obedience, because God will change their hearts and cause them to become inwardly obedient to Him.

On the other hand, in v. 2, we find out that God has “all day long,” which is to say, all throughout their history, “spread out [His] hands...to a rebellious people,” the nation of Israel, and appealed to them to become authentic believers. However, they “walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts.” They have gone their own way and rejected God’s moral commandments. As a result, God says that they are “a people who continually provoke Me to My face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks” (v. 3). They are also those “who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine’s flesh, and the broth of unclean meat is in their pots” (v. 4). Plus, they say, “Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!” These are smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day” (v. 5). In other words, the Jews are rebelling against the Mosaic Covenant. Instead of bringing their offerings and sacrifices to God at the temple in Jerusalem, they sacrifice to pagan gods in the gardens of their homes. Instead of seeking God’s counsel from the biblical authors and the priests who should be teaching them His instructions, they engage in necromancy and appeal to the dead for advice on how to live life. Finally, they reject God’s dietary laws and eat pork. And all the time, they are so blind to the truth that they honestly believe that they are moral and obedient to God. If anyone criticizes them and tries to bring to their attention that they are violating the Mosaic Covenant, they ostracize him and tell him to get away, telling him that they are the holy ones, not him.

What does God think of these hypocrites? “These are smoke in My nostrils,” He says, which makes Him cough and sputter with indignation “all the day” that He is also reaching out to them to encourage them to repent and humble themselves before Him (vs. 2 & 5).

God goes on to say in vs. 6-7,

65:6 “Behold, it is written before Me,
I will not keep silent, but I will repay;
I will even repay into their bosom,

65:7 Both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together,” says Yahweh.
“Because they have burned incense on the mountains
And scorned Me on the hills,
Therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom.”

The fact of the matter is that human sin deserves to have God “repay” the person for it with His justice, condemnation, and destruction. Indeed, God has caused this principle to be “written” before Him, literally “before My face” (v. 6). He is referring to all the scriptures of the Bible which He has inspired the authors to write regarding all His plans and purposes, including those to judge Israel for their disobedience and all other human beings also at the end of history. And following in the footsteps of “their fathers” and committing their same “iniquities,” the Jews will receive the proper and measured justice from God (v. 7). They “have burned incense on the mountains” to pagan gods instead of being satisfied with the incense that the priests burn in the temple in accordance with the Mosaic Covenant (v. 7).

But then in vs. 8-10 God completely changes His tune,

65:8 Thus says Yahweh,

“As the new wine is found in the cluster,
And one says, ‘Do not destroy it, for there is benefit in it,’
So I will act on behalf of My servants
In order not to destroy all of them.

65:9 “I will bring forth offspring from Jacob (וְהוֹצֵאתִי מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי לֵבָיִם),

And an heir of My mountains from Judah;
Even My chosen ones shall inherit it,
And My servants will dwell there.

65:10 “Sharon will be a pasture land for flocks,
And the valley of Achor a resting place for herds,
For My people who seek Me.

A cluster of grapes has the potential to produce new wine if it is dealt with properly. The same is true of the nation of Israel. While they for the most part may be rebelling against God at any moment of their history, He can transform them into the new wine of the “great nation,” which He promised to Abraham. Just as someone will say, “Do not destroy the cluster of grapes, because we can make wine from it,” so also God is saying, “Do not destroy Israel, because I can fulfill My promise and shape them into the most powerful nation in history.” Therefore, God will “act on behalf of [His] servants,” the Jews, so that no matter how much judgment and how many disciplinary actions He sends their way, they will not all be destroyed (v. 8)

In fact, His unstoppable plan is to “bring forth offspring from Jacob,” from the descendants of Abraham’s grandson, the people who can be said to “an heir of...Judah.” Thus, they will inherit, possess, and dwell on the land of Israel, having been “chosen” by God to serve Him there as the central and most important ethnic group of the whole earth (v. 9). The area of “Sharon” and “the valley of Achor” will permanently become wonderful pasture land for Israel’s flocks, for the people of Israel “who seek” God with genuine faith (v. 10).

However, God is not finished in this chapter with pronouncing judgment on unbelieving Jews. Verses 11-15 demonstrate this,

65:11 “But you who forsake Yahweh,
Who forget My holy mountain,
Who set a table for Fortune,
And who fill cups with mixed wine for Destiny,

65:12 I will destine you for the sword,
And all of you will bow down to the slaughter.
Because I called, but you did not answer;
I spoke, but you did not hear.
And you did evil in My sight
And chose that in which I did not delight.”

65:13 Therefore, thus says Adonai Yahweh,

“Behold, My servants will eat, but you will be hungry.
Behold, My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty.
Behold, My servants will rejoice, but you will be put to shame.

65:14 “Behold, My servants will shout joyfully with a glad heart,
But you will cry out with a heavy heart,
And you will wail with a broken spirit.

65:15 “You will leave your name for a curse to My chosen ones,
And Adonai Yahweh will slay you.
But My servants will be called by another name.

Those who abandon God, who use their meals like a Ouija board to discover the future, God will discipline with death at the hands of their enemies (vs. 11,12). God has repeatedly appealed to the Jews to repent and obey Him, but they in turn have repeatedly closed their ears to His voice and pursued engaging in evil right in front of Him (v. 12). The consequence for their rebellion and ignoring Him will be that, while Jews who are genuinely obeying Him from their circumcised hearts will eat, drink, rejoice, and shout joyfully as they experience God’s faithful abundance in the millennial kingdom, these unbelieving Jews will encounter only hunger, thirst, shame, a heavy heart, and a broken spirit as they head towards God’s final disciplinary actions on this earth, death at the hands of their enemies (vs. 13,14). These who are choosing to be rebellious will acquire a “name” for posterity that represents people who are cursed by God among His really “chosen ones,” the Jews who have a changed inwardness and are obeying Him from hearts of genuine faith. Thus, in contrast to those of unbelief, God’s “servants” will acquire a different name that demonstrates the condition of their hearts and obedience (v. 15).

God continues speaking in v. 16 of the Jews who survive His judgment and destruction, “Because he who is blessed in the earth will be blessed by the God of truth; and he who swears in the earth will swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My sight!” Because the Jews are the subject of the immediate context, I think that the “earth,” *’eretz* (אֶרֶץ), is really the “land” of Israel. The Jew who finds himself “blessed on the land” of Israel will be such because he is “blessed by the God of truth.” This is the Jew who has embraced the biblical message with all his heart, mind, and will. He also “swears on the land” of Israel, meaning that he is committed to God within his heart of faith. And this is the case for the entire nation of Israel, because all the Jews have good hearts, and God has put behind Him forever the former disciplinary actions He brought on His chosen people. They are “hidden from [His] sight” permanently!

Additionally, in vs. 17-25, God talks about how the Jews who will be living with abundance and *shalom*. He begins in v. 17, “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.” God will revamp and renovate the natural order of the creation. While it is tempting to associate this statement with Revelation 21:1, which uses similar language to refer to a whole new cosmos after the present one is destroyed, I think that Isaiah is referring to this cosmos. During the millennial kingdom, there will be radical changes which God has brought about at Jesus’ return. While, during their history, the Jews will have experienced a tremendous amount of suffering because of their rejection of God and His consequent judgments, all these past events will be like water under the bridge for them. The *shalom* and peace which they will enjoy when God finally makes them a “great nation” will make their former suffering pale in comparison, to the extent that they will forget about the past and simply enjoy the present while also looking forward without fear to the permanent future of the millennial kingdom.

God continues in vs. 18-19,

65:18 “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;
For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing
And her people for gladness.

65:19 “I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people;

And there will no longer be heard in her
The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.

The same word as in Genesis 1:1, *bara'* (בָּרָא) is here in v. 18, but as a participle, *boray'* (בוֹרֵא). Just as God created the heavens and the earth, bringing them into existence by means of His transcendent power, God is literally “creating” a new Jerusalem. Again, this is not the eternal New Jerusalem of Revelation 21, but the city on the present earth which will never see another unbeliever darken its gates or walk its streets. God will make the Jews a “people for gladness,” meaning that they will all have circumcised hearts of genuine faith, and they will all rejoice and be glad for what God has brought about in their lives. He will have made them a community of believers who are the greatest nation in history, and they will rule the world (v. 18). As a result, God Himself “will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad,” because He will have finally accomplished His purposes for Israel. He will have made them a nation of authentic and permanent believers. Never again will they weep over loss and destruction caused by their enemies, because, by implication, God will have destroyed their enemies and will protect them from any future threat during the millennial kingdom (v. 19).

And untimely death in Jerusalem (and on the rest of the land of Israel) will also be a thing of the past. “No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed” (v. 20). The Jews will live long and healthy lives and die simply because of old age, not because of illness, defect, or disease. I think that the correct way to interpret the statement, “And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed,” is that this person will not actually exist in Israel. Every Jew will be an authentic believer and under the blessing of God on their land. Therefore, no member of the “great nation” will be theologically able to be cursed by God. Indeed, God’s curses of His chosen people will be a thing of the past, never to recur during the millennial kingdom. In other words, no Jew will be someone who fundamentally rebels against God.

Likewise, God says in vs. 21-23,

- 65:21 “They will build houses and inhabit them;
They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
65:22 “They will not build and another inhabit,
They will not plant and another eat;
For as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people,
And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.
65:23 “They will not labor in vain,
Or bear children for calamity;
For they are the offspring of those blessed by Yahweh,
And their descendants with them.

The Jews, all of whom will worship God with genuine hearts of faith, will build their homes on the land of Israel and never have to be afraid of leaving them or having their enemies occupy them. The same for the food which they grow. It will remain theirs to consume and not be stolen by others (vs. 21,22). Just as trees typically survive a long time, so also will be the life expectancy of each individual Jew during the millennial kingdom. And whatever they make for the benefit of sustaining and enjoying their lives will not deteriorate, disintegrate, or fall apart (v. 22). Thus, “they will not labor in vain,” as previous generations of Jews did when their enemies conquered them and they watched all their hard work of building and plant go up in smoke. Nothing they build, or make, or harvest will be taken without their permission by their enemies. Neither will it crumble away and disappear through the natural process of deterioration. Whatever the Jews produce, they will use or consume appropriately (v. 23).

Additionally, the Jews will never again have children whom they do not watch grow into adults and enjoy for as long as the mothers and fathers live. Nor will they be taken from them and, by

implication, sold into slavery or simply stolen, as has happened in the past. This will be because they all are “the offspring of those blessed by Yahweh.” The children’s parents are authentic in their faith. Therefore, the children will also become adults of true faith. Every Jew living during the time of the restored Kingdom of Israel will be a sinner of changed heart and genuine belief and obedience. They will all demonstrate what it means on this earth to be the “blessed” and chosen people of God (v. 23).

As such who are “blessed,” the people of Israel will be assured that God will always hear their prayers. In fact, God will begin answering their prayers even before they address themselves to Him. He says in v. 24, “It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.” This may very well mean, also, that each individual Jew will pray according to God’s desire and plan. As authentic believers, the nation of Israel will understand their role as righteous people who obey God and rule the world with their Messiah. Therefore, they will pray in line with their fundamental desire for morality and goodness in order to fulfill their role.

And finally in v. 25, like Isaiah 11:6, God provides a description of the new and radically changed order within the animal world, “‘The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,’ says Yahweh.” Peace will reign in the animal kingdom between past mortal enemies such as the wolf and the lamb, and the lion and the ox. And rather than snakes eating other snakes or animals, they will find their food in other kinds of life that come from the ground—taking the Hebrew word “dust” (*aphar*, אֶפְרַיִם) as referring to the earth and what it produces, e.g., edible plants. This is to say that snakes will be vegetarians and will not kill for food. God’s “holy mountain,” Jerusalem (and, by extrapolation, the entire land of Israel), will become a place of complete peace and *shalom* for not only the Jews, but also for the animals.

Again, all this is an apt description of God’s fulfillment of the three covenants, the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic, when the nation of Israel acquires ascendancy over all the Gentiles—even though their leader, the Messiah and suffering servant of Isaiah 53, is not mentioned in this chapter. But certainly he is implied. Thus, God is saying in Isaiah 65 that He will cause both the Jews and the Gentiles to embrace Him as their God, while specifically fulfilling His promise to the Jews to make them a “great nation.”

Isaiah 66

66:1 Thus says Yahweh,

“Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.
Where then is a house you could build for Me?
And where is a place that I may rest?

66:2 “For My hand made all these things,

Thus all these things came into being,” declares Yahweh.

“But to this one I will look,

To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

66:3 “But he who kills an ox is like one who slays a man;

He who sacrifices a lamb is like the one who breaks a dog’s neck;
He who offers a grain offering is like one who offers swine’s blood;
He who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol.

As they have chosen their own ways (וְגַם-הֵמָּה בָּחָרוּ בְּדַרְכֵיהֶם),

And their soul delights in their abominations,

66:4 So I will choose their punishments

And will bring on them what they dread.
Because I called, but no one answered;
I spoke, but they did not listen.

And they did evil in My sight

And chose that in which I did not delight.”

66:5 Hear the word of Yahweh, you who tremble at His word:

“Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name’s sake,

- Have said, 'Let Yahweh be glorified, that we may see your joy.'
But they will be put to shame.
- 66:6 "A voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple,
The voice of Yahweh who is rendering recompense to His enemies.
- 66:7 "Before she travailed, she brought forth;
Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy.
- 66:8 "Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?
Can a land be born in one day?
Can a nation be brought forth all at once?
As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.
- 66:9 "Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?" says Yahweh.
"Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?" says your God.
- 66:10 "Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her;
Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her,
- 66:11 That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts,
That you may suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom."
- 66:12 For thus says Yahweh, "Behold, I extend peace (שָׁלוֹם) to her like a river,
And the glory of the nations (כְּבוֹד גּוֹיִם) like an overflowing stream;
And you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees.
- 66:13 "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you;
And you will be comforted in Jerusalem."
- 66:14 Then you will see this, and your heart will be glad,
And your bones will flourish like the new grass;
And the hand of Yahweh will be made known to His servants,
But He will be indignant toward His enemies.
- 66:15 For behold, Yahweh will come in fire
And His chariots like the whirlwind,
To render His anger with fury,
And His rebuke with flames of fire.
- 66:16 For Yahweh will execute judgment by fire
And by His sword on all flesh,
And those slain by Yahweh will be many.
- 66:17 "Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go to the gardens,
Following one in the center,
Who eat swine's flesh, detestable things and mice,
Will come to an end altogether (יַחְדָּו יָסֹפּוּ)," declares Yahweh.
- 66:18 "For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues.
And they shall come and see My glory.
- 66:19 "I will set a sign among them and will send survivors (פְּלִיטִים) from them to the nations:
Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard
My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations.
- 66:20 "Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to Yahweh, on
horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says
Yahweh, "just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of
Yahweh.
- 66:21 "I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites," says Yahweh.
- 66:22 "For just as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I make will endure (עֲמֻדִים) before Me," declares Yahweh,
"So your offspring and your name will endure (כִּן יִצְמַח וְזֶרְעֲכֶם וְשִׁמְכֶם).
- 66:23 "And it shall be from new moon to new moon
And from sabbath to sabbath,
All mankind (כָּל־בְּשָׂר) will come to bow down before Me," says Yahweh.
- 66:24 "Then they will go forth and look
On the corpses of the men
Who have transgressed against Me.

For their worm will not die
 And their fire will not be quenched;
 And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind (לְכָל-בָּשָׂר).”

This is the last chapter of Isaiah, and it touches on all the themes we have seen so far—the Israelites’ disobedience and misapplication of the Mosaic Covenant, God’s ensuing judgment and disciplinary actions towards them, God’s destruction of Israel’s enemies, His changing Israel from a nation of unbelievers to one of believers, some of whom return from foreign lands to repopulate the land of Israel, His sending out the Jews to the nations to instruct them in His ways, and His causing their descendants to endure for many generations.

Isaiah begins in vs. 1-2 by quoting God,

66:1 Thus says Yahweh,

“Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool.
 Where then is a house you could build for Me?
 And where is a place that I may rest?

66:2 “For My hand made all these things,

Thus all these things came into being,” declares Yahweh.
 “But to this one I will look,
 To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

The God of Israel, Yahweh is His name, rules from His position of transcending the creation, and the “earth” submits to His sovereign rule. And God asks if it is possible to build Him a dwelling place on the earth where He may lie down and rest? The implied answer is, “No.” Because God is eternal and a completely self-sufficient being who never rests and never sleeps, He needs no “house” on earth and, indeed, cannot be contained in any building that man might construct. In addition, anything and everything that exists apart from Him is something which He has made by His “hand,” His sovereign and transcendent power that controls all the created reality. Each and every element of the creation “came into being” according to His will and desire.

These verses should remind us of what God says in Isaiah 45:5-7,

45:5 “I am Yahweh, and there is no other;

Besides Me there is no God.

I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

45:6 That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun

That there is no one besides Me.

I am Yahweh, and there is no other,

45:7 The One forming light and creating darkness,

Causing well-being/shalom and creating calamity/evil;

I am Yahweh who does all these.

In this passage, God is saying not only that He is the sole and unique eternal Being, but also that in regard to the intellectual and moral elements which exist apart from Him, He is their source. There is light, which is truth and goodness, and there is darkness, which is falsehood and evil. There is well-being, i.e., *shalom* in the Hebrew, which also consists of truth and goodness, and there is calamity, which is the plain vanilla Hebrew word for evil, *ra’* (רָע), which consists of falsehood and lies. The picture we get from the Bible is that God is a grand storyteller, and the history which we are living is His story, so that every rock, tree, grasshopper, human being, and event which occurs as a result of people’s, animals’, birds’, fishes’, etc. choices “came into being” (cf. Isaiah 66:2), comes into being, and will come into being for all of eternity, because God makes (*‘asah*, עָשָׂה), forms (*yatzar*, יָצַר), and creates (*bara’*, בָּרָא) every detail of His story. Like a potter shaping the clay on His wheel, God forms

and shapes (this is the Hebrew word *yatzar* (יצר) in Isaiah 45:7) the creation and every moment of its existence, whether the far distant galaxies or ourselves and our choices as individual human beings.

Certainly, this is a difficult concept to wrap our minds around, that there is nothing independent of God, even though we feel as though we are autonomous beings who exercise our wills with complete freedom. But the Bible, and specifically a passage such as Isaiah 45:5-7, teaches us that reality is different from what we “feel.” In other words, we have to believe what the Bible says and what our “heads” tell us is the truth based upon the rational ideas of the biblical authors rather than what our “feelings” lead us to think. If God explicitly states that He “creates” (out of nothing, which is the only way that He creates anything) darkness and evil, then this is what we have to embrace intellectually, even if it is difficult to grasp. However, it does fit with the idea that He is a potter who is shaping clay and a storyteller who is telling a story. As we think of potters and storytellers, it is impossible for us to imagine that the clay or story can shape itself or tell itself at any moment or to any extent apart from their potter or author. Therefore, no matter how we feel about our independence from God (or lack thereof), the fact is that He is sovereignly causing every detail of His story and our story to exist. This is the greatness of God which He is expressing in the first part of Isaiah 65:2z.

God goes on in the last half of v. 2 to inform His listeners and readers that He accepts and is pleased with only one kind of sinful human being, “him who is humble and contrite of spirit, who trembles at My word.” God “will look” at people who fully acknowledge that God is their creator, so that they are completely dependent on Him for everything in their lives and they need His grace, mercy, and forgiveness in order to escape His judgment and condemnation. The Greek Septuagint translates the Hebrew with a word that means “to look on with care.” Thus, God cares for and will grant life, even eternal life, to the Israelite who humbles himself before Him and is repentant of his sin. However, we have seen that this kind of person becomes this way only by means of God working within him and circumcising, i.e., changing, his heart. So this is implied in what He is saying here.

Then God continues in vs. 3-4 by describing the opposite kind of Jews within the nation of Israel,

66:3 “But he who kills an ox is like one who slays a man;
 He who sacrifices a lamb is like the one who breaks a dog’s neck;
 He who offers a grain offering is like one who offers swine’s blood;
 He who burns incense is like the one who blesses an idol.
 As they have chosen their own ways,
 And their soul delights in their abominations,
 66:4 So I will choose their punishments
 And will bring on them what they dread.
 Because I called, but no one answered;
 I spoke, but they did not listen.
 And they did evil in My sight
 And chose that in which I did not delight.”

These are members of God’s chosen people who think that they are correctly obeying the ceremonial and sacrificial commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, but they are missing the point. Instead of worshiping God from genuinely changed hearts, they are only going through the motions. God says that they might as well be committing murder, eating forbidden pork, and worshiping pagan idols. Because their hearts are not right before God, “they have chosen their own ways,” not God’s way of obeying Him. As a result, “their soul,” which is to say their existences that includes their minds, hearts, and choices, “delights in their abominations” and rebellion against God. These Jews are happy and content with their religion, but God certainly is not (v. 3).

Consequently, God “will choose their punishments” and bring His judgments and disciplinary actions on them, the things which “they dread.” He has called out to the nation of Israel and spoken to them from the time of Abraham and through His prophets, but they have not listened. He has given them His scriptures, the writings of authors who have presented His truth to them and for them, but the Jews have ignored them. Instead, they have done “evil in My sight.” They have chosen to live

their lives in a manner which is not pleasing to God, in spite of His clear communications and warnings to them (v. 4).

And what will God do to His people who disobey Him? He says in vs. 5-6,

66:5 Hear the word of Yahweh, you who tremble at His word:

“Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name’s sake,
Have said, ‘Let Yahweh be glorified, that we may see your joy.’
But they will be put to shame.

66:6 “A voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple,
The voice of Yahweh who is rendering recompense to His enemies.”

First God addresses the people who are being ostracized from society by their fellow Jews. These are the ones whose hearts are right and who are authentically following God and His commandments. He describes them as the ones “who tremble at His word,” the truth which He has presented to the nation of Israel, which includes both His gracious *hesed* (constant faithfulness) according to His promises and His warnings of judgment in the midst of His *hesed*. The Jews who have rejected God are their “brothers who hate you, who exclude you [from their tightknit religious society]” while thinking that they are doing so “for My name’s sake.” They honestly believe that God is pleased with their outward obedience to the point that they say, “Let Yahweh be glorified [by our religious actions] that we may see “your joy,” by which I think they mean either each other’s joy by being blessed by God with prosperity and safety or God’s (“Your”) joy because they are so pleasing to Him.

However, God states that “they will be put to shame” (v. 5). Instead of His blessing, they will receive His curse and judgments, which Deuteronomy 28 describes. In this vein, God continues in v. 6 to indicate that He will pay these “enemies” with His “recompense,” the wage which they deserve. And the justice which He executes towards them will begin “from the city” of Jerusalem and “from the temple” which is located there. It will be like “a voice of uproar,” of anger and indignation from their God.

Then in vs. 7-16 God switches from the theme of judgment to that of blessing. He begins in vs. 7-8 with the metaphor of a woman giving birth,

66:7 “Before she travailed, she brought forth;
Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy.

66:8 “Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things?
Can a land be born in one day?
Can a nation be brought forth all at once?
As soon as Zion travailed, she also brought forth her sons.

I think that Jerusalem is being compared to a woman in childbirth. The remarkable aspect of this woman is that she gives birth “to a boy” before her labor pains begin. Thus, Jerusalem has brought forth a child before the city experienced any real suffering. The analogy indicates that there are two kinds of people in Jerusalem. One kind existed before the city endured destruction by its enemies. The other kind will exist after the destruction. I suggest that the first kind are unbelieving Jews who warrant God’s judgment, which has occurred, for example, with the Babylonian invasion around 600 B.C. and with the Roman’s destroying the city in A.D. 70.

Then God asks if something so remarkable as a “land [being] born in one day” or “a nation [being] brought forth all at once” can happen? The implied answer is, “Of course! Because God is God.” Therefore, “as soon as Zion travailed [or suffers deep labor pains], she also brought [or brings] forth sons.” God is saying that it is inevitable that the Jews of Jerusalem experience the pain of attacks by their enemies, which will even be the case when the Beast of Revelation and his armies invade Israel immediately before Jesus’ return. But this will not stop God from quickly producing the “great nation” of the Abrahamic promise with Jews who are genuinely circumcised of heart. Out of Israel’s pain will come their rest and joy in the millennial kingdom.

God continues this theme in v. 9,

66:9 “Shall I bring to the point of birth and not give delivery?” says Yahweh.
“Or shall I who gives delivery shut the womb?” says your God.

I think that He is speaking of the history of the Jews, especially their suffering the oppression of their final enemies before their Messiah appears to restore the Kingdom of Israel, as that time when a baby is growing in its mother’s womb where its birth will constitute His fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation.” Therefore, God is asking if it makes sense that He would keep the rebellious nation of Israel in existence for their entire history, while they also experience the heartache of His many judgments, and then not keep His oath to make them the most powerful nation in human history?

God answers the question in vs. 10-11,

66:10 “Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her;
Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her,
66:11 That you may nurse and be satisfied with her comforting breasts,
That you may suck and be delighted with her bountiful bosom.”

By commanding all those who love God, who love His plans for the Jews, who love the Jews, and who love their capital city Jerusalem as the center of their worship of God, to rejoice in what He is doing with the city, God is implying that He will definitely follow through on all which He has said He will do for His chosen people. Yes, people may “mourn over” the city whenever it suffers destruction, e.g., by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., by the Romans in A.D. 70, and by the hostile armies of Revelation, but they can “be exceedingly glad” that this is not the end of the story for Jerusalem and the Jews. Continuing with the birth and baby metaphor, people of authentic faith will “nurse and be satisfied with [Jerusalem’s] comforting breasts.” I think that this ultimately refers to time of the “great nation” of the Jews when their Messiah, Jesus, appears (his second coming) to establish his kingdom according to the prophets and Revelation 20. It will be a time of great prosperity, shalom, and blessing for even the Gentiles who become authentic believers and look to Jesus and the Jewish people for instruction on how to obey God so that they likewise enjoy His grace, mercy, and promise of eternal life.

But God’s exhortations and comforting words seem mainly for the Jews as vs. 12-14 demonstrate,

66:12 For thus says Yahweh, “Behold, I extend peace to her like a river,
And the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream;
And you will be nursed, you will be carried on the hip and fondled on the knees.
66:13 “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you;
And you will be comforted in Jerusalem.”
66:14 Then you will see this, and your heart will be glad,
And your bones will flourish like the new grass;
And the hand of Yahweh will be made known to His servants,
But He will be indignant toward His enemies.

God is going to grant *shalom* to Jerusalem that will be “like a river” that never stops flowing. Plus, He will give the “glory of the nations,” their wealth and their support, to the city which will be “like an overflowing stream.” Believing Gentiles will never cease in their bringing their gifts to the Jews as demonstration of their devotion and commitment to their God and His Messiah, Jesus. These same Gentiles will also “carry” the Jews and provide them with transportation back to the land which God promised them through Abraham so that they will feel comforted and safe in their presence (vs. 12-13). As a result, the nation of Israel will “be glad” in their “heart,” and they “will flourish like the new grass.” God will cause them to experience a level of prosperity and fruitfulness as never before.

By all this God will make His “hand,” His power and sovereignty, “known to His servants,” the Jews. He will also “be indignant toward His enemies,” meaning that He will destroy them (v. 14). Here God may be referring to the same enemies as in v. 6, Jews who have rebelled against Him will thinking that they are pleasing to Him by outwardly following the Mosaic Covenant. Or He means Israel’s external enemies along with their internal ones

Notice what He goes on to say in vs. 15-17,

- 66:15** For behold, Yahweh will come in fire
And His chariots like the whirlwind,
To render His anger with fury,
And His rebuke with flames of fire.
- 66:16** For Yahweh will execute judgment by fire
And by His sword on all flesh,
And those slain by Yahweh will be many.
- 66:17** “Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go to the gardens,
Following one in the center,
Who eat swine’s flesh, detestable things and mice,
Will come to an end altogether (יִהְיֶה יָסָפִי),” declares Yahweh.

Verse 16 clearly states that God “will execute judgment” on His enemies so that there will be many who die. And vs. 15 & 17 indicate His instruments of judgment, “fire,” “chariots like the whirlwind,” “His sword” which will be “on all flesh.” But who are these enemies, i.e., “all flesh?” He has described them in v. 12. They are specifically those “who eat swine’s flesh” and “detestable things,” which is to say, food that is violation of the dietary commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. But because God made this covenant with only the Jews, He must have them in mind here as those who are His enemies whom He will judge and destroy. They “will come to an end altogether.” Not that the whole nation of Israel will disappear, but, as we saw God make a distinction above in v. 5, only those who hate their believing brother Jews while they themselves think that they are pleasing to God by their external religious actions.

God also says in vs. 18-19,

- 66:18** “For I know their works and their thoughts.
The time is coming to gather all nations and tongues.
And they shall come and see My glory.
- 66:19** “I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations:
Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan,
to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory.
And they will declare My glory among the nations.

I have changed the punctuation of the NAS95, because I think that the first statement of v. 18 is in regard to the unbelieving Jews while the second and third statements are in regard to believing Jews and their effect on the rest of the world. God first says that He knows exactly what is going on with His people who are obeying Him with their external actions but not with their hearts. Therefore, as His enemies they will not escape His judgment. Then He says that there is coming a time when the Gentile nations will gather on the land of Israel to see His glory. God may be speaking of these people also being His enemies so that He is bringing them against the Jews in order to destroy them. Or He may be referring to their responding to the return of Jesus the Messiah and their believing in him and observing the greatness of the Jewish people as the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. I think that it is the second option because of what God goes on to say in v. 19, that He is going to establish a “sign among” the Jews so that He will then “send survivors from them to the nations.” After God has judged and destroyed the unbelieving Jews who have rebelled against Him just before Jesus’ return, He will send out the remaining Jews, i.e., the “survivors,” who have been loyal to Him

and who now have hearts of authentic belief. Their responsibility will be to instruct the Gentiles in foreign countries, so that many of them will also become genuine believers. These countries are represented in v. 19 by the names “Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan,” and “the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory.” Tarshish could be as close to Israel as the Aegean Sea or as far away as Spain. No one really knows. Put is possibly Libya in north Africa. Lud could also be near Egypt or in Asia Minor. Meshech and Tubal are most likely in central Asia Minor, while Magog, which is mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39 along with these, is probably in northern Asia Minor near the Black Sea. Javan could be southwest Asia Minor. Finally, the “distant coastlands” would be areas of the Mediterranean Sea that are farther from Israel than any of the above mentioned nations.

The new believers in the Gentile nations around the world will not have previously really listened to biblical instruction so as to embrace it. But now they will definitely hear how honorable God is and what it means to honor Him. And, like everyone else, they will not have seen God’s “glory.” Thus, these Gentiles will subsequently “come and see My glory,” the fulfillment of God’s promise to the Jews to make them safe and prosperous on their land. In this way, the newly formed “great nation” of the Jews, as spoken of in Genesis 12:1-2, “will declare [God’s] glory among the nations.”

And v. 20 states that there is more that the believing Gentiles will do, “Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to Yahweh, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says Yahweh, ‘just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of Yahweh.’” In the Mosaic Covenant, God has commanded the Jews to worship Him by bringing Him a “grain offering” in the temple in Jerusalem. Similarly, the believing Gentiles in the various nations around the world will bring the Jews back to Jerusalem and the land of Israel from these foreign countries. This will be their “grain offering” to Yahweh, the God of the Jews and now their own God because of their authentic belief. And according to v. 21, God will take some of these returning Jews and make them priests within His temple in Jerusalem, “I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites,’ says Yahweh.”

And how permanent will these changes be for Israel and the world? Verses 22-23 provide the answer,

- 66:22 “For just as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I make will endure before Me,” declares Yahweh,
“So your offspring and your name will endure.
66:23 “And it shall be from new moon to new moon
And from sabbath to sabbath,
All mankind will come to bow down before Me,” says Yahweh.

God states in v. 22 that the new order of the cosmos which He will bring about when He makes the Jews a “great nation” and when Jesus returns will “endure before” Him. Likewise, the “offspring” and descendants of the Jews will go on “from new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath,” meaning for generation after generation until God has finished His plans for the Jews within the present realm. In addition, during this extension of time which I think we can identify as the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, “all mankind will come to bow down before” God. This last statement could mean that all the earth will acknowledge that God is God and Jesus is His Messiah, even if some of the Gentiles do not have genuine hearts of belief. Or the phrase “all mankind,” literally “all flesh,” could refer to the “offspring” of the Jews in v. 22, so that the statement means that every Jew from the beginning of the millennial kingdom to its end will worship God with authentic faith from circumcised hearts. I am inclined to think that the second option is correct in this context. God has promised to make the Jews a “great nation,” and the definition of it includes that every Jew during millennial kingdom will have a heart which has been changed by the Spirit of God. The result will be that each individual member of the nation of Israel truly bows down and worships God in a

genuine manner and with authentic belief in Yahweh and Jesus as His Messiah. In other words, each Jew of the “great nation” will be a Christian.

God ends this passage in v. 24, “Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched. And they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.” Again, I assume in this context that “they” are the believing Jews who are living on the land of Israel under the leadership of Jesus as their king. Therefore, “all mankind,” literally “all flesh,” refers to only them also. The “men who have transgressed against” God are the Jews whom vs. 3-4 above described as those who only outwardly obeyed the Mosaic Covenant, but lacked authentic inwardness. As a result, God brought judgment and destruction on them, so that initially their dead bodies are seen by the surviving Jews, who realize that “their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched.” I suggest that these are metaphorical statements which indicate that they will suffer eternal extinction for their rebellion against God. Worms eat flesh until it is completely consumed. And fire accomplishes the same end. Therefore, Jews (and all other sinful human beings) who incur God’s judgment and condemnation will ultimately disappear from His story.

We see that Isaiah 66 describes not only God’s keeping His promise to Abraham to shape his descendants into the most powerful nation in human history, but also His following through on His threat to bring judgment and destruction on the persistent unbelieving Jews. The members of the nation of Israel who demonstrate their faithful obedience to Him and teach the other nations about Him will enjoy the *shalom* environment of the millennial kingdom. The Jews who rebel against Him and are unwilling to follow the Mosaic Covenant with genuine hearts of belief will face God’s anger, judgment, and eternal condemnation of being destroyed by God. All the Jews will observe God’s earthly judgment which takes place immediately prior to the return of the Messiah, and only some of them will survive the judgment and become people who “tremble at [God’s] word” (cf. v. 2). This is the theme which gets repeated within the prophets of the Old Testament, imitating what Moses proclaimed to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 28-30. God will fulfill His promise to Abraham to make the Jews a “great nation” of believers, but only after He disciplines them often during their history, using Gentile nations, whom He judges and destroys, to oppress and persecute them, while also causing many Gentiles to become authentic believers.