

EXPOSITION OF THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH

—Commentary by—

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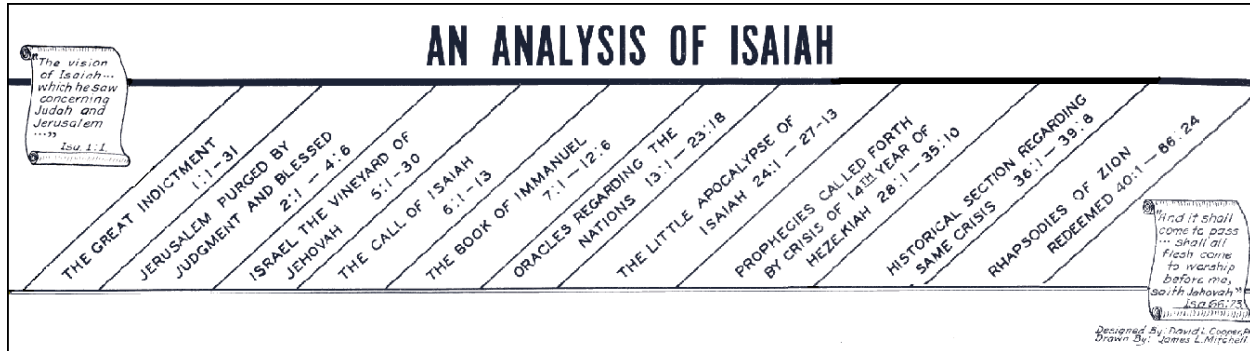
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Exposition of the Message of the Prophet Isaiah

by Dr. David L. Cooper

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Isaiah lived in the times of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. His ministry covered fifty-odd years. There were many changes that took place during his time. For instance, there seems to have been comparative prosperity during certain portions of the reign of Uzziah. There was, however, the ebb and flow of events which rapidly changed the established order.

The prophet Isaiah, judged from the human standpoint, was indeed one of Israel's greatest statesmen. Of course, his wisdom and insight into matters were due to his inspiration. Nevertheless he had natural ability as a leader of men.

Though he was a very strong character, he encountered much opposition. Yet he stood like a towering oak against the storm of criticism and persecution. According to tradition he finally suffered a martyr's death.

The Book of Isaiah is one of the greatest of all the books of the Scriptures. It is, in the original Hebrew, poetry with the exception of chapters 36-39. Isaiah is called the great evangelical prophet. He ran the whole gamut of prophetic vision and outlook. His prophecies reach the highest point of glory and power. No one can justly claim to have a grip upon the Scriptures who is not familiar with his writings.

By certain rationalistic scholars, the Book of Isaiah has been dissected and apportioned to various writers—without any justification whatsoever. It is purely upon subjective grounds that any portion of the book is denied to our great statesman-prophet. The vocabulary and style are the same throughout. The *outlook* is the same. The marvelous predictions that blossom in chapters 40-66 and send forth their fragrance throughout the world appear here and there in the first thirty-nine chapters. The last twenty-seven have been appropriately called "The Rhapsodies of Zion Redeemed." Thinking of the entire book in terms of a modern hymn, I would call the last twenty-seven chapters the chorus, whereas the first thirty-nine, constitute the verses of the song. The very measures that reach the highest point of sublimity in the chorus are found scattered here and there through the verses.

The first chapter of the book has been well called "The Great Indictment of the Jewish Nation." The prophet detested formalism and professionalism—formalism on the part of the laity and professionalism on the part of the priesthood. He, like any other true servant of God, preferred that there be no worship at all rather than that which was offered in a perfunctory manner—serving God with the lips whereas the heart is far removed from contemplation upon and worship of God.

The prophet's second recorded sermon constitutes chapters 2:1-4:6. In this message he struck the keynote of all his declarations which vibrate with the hope of the establishment of Messiah's great kingdom. This sermon began with an oracle concerning Jerusalem, redeemed and glorified, the capital of King Messiah. In his vision he sees streams of people visiting it from all quarters of the globe, going there to be taught by the God of Jacob, King Messiah, who rules a peaceful world in which righteousness is the dominant element. Following this introduction he denounced the customs, borrowed from the heathen and introduced into Jewish society. He condemned their wickedness and foretold the day of Jehovah, which is the Tribulation. He depicted the moral and spiritual decay of the nation at that time. Furthermore, he saw the wanton lives of the daughters of Zion (the Jewish women) in the last days. Finally, however, he concluded his message in chapter 4 by giving a picture of Jerusalem purged, cleansed, and created anew, the joy of the whole earth.

In chapter 5 there is a marvelous revelation. Israel is represented as the vineyard of Jehovah, upon which the Lord had spared no means in order to make it bear luscious grapes of righteousness and justice. Instead of that, this vine bore the sour, bitter grapes of oppression and wickedness. The prophet was very specific and pointed out various sins, pronouncing a woe upon those perpetrating them.

Chapter 6 is the call of Isaiah. At this time the prophet saw Jehovah high, lifted up, and His train filled the Temple. It was the Lord Jesus Christ whom he saw in this vision (John 12:39-41). Seeing the glory of the Lord, the prophet offered himself for full-time service and was accepted by the Lord but was shown the hard, difficult, rough road which lay before him. Nevertheless he accepted the challenge.

Chapters 7 to 12 constitute the Book of Immanuel. This word means "God with us." In 7:14 we see a prediction of the miraculous conception and virgin birth of King Messiah. In chapter 9:6,7 the vision advances; we see King Messiah who has destroyed all the weapons of war, mounting the throne of David and taking into His righteous hands the government of the world. Finally, in chapter 11 a most glorious picture of His universal reign is presented. At that time the curse will be lifted from the world; the lion and the lamb will lie down together, and universal peace will be the order of the day. This section of the book concludes with a song of redemption and praise in chapter 12.

Isaiah, like the other prophets, looking beyond the borders of Israel, was given a vision of the future that awaited surrounding nations. He looked as far east as Babylon and foretold its complete destruction in "the day of Jehovah," which is the Tribulation. In chapters 13 and 14 is a marvelous prediction of the final overthrow of this ancient enemy of God in the plains of Shinar. These two chapters should be studied, especially in connection with Jeremiah 50 and 51 and Revelation 18, all of which refer to the literal Babylon of the Tribulation. Babylon was never overthrown as was foretold by Isaiah and Jeremiah. Since those predictions have never been fulfilled, we may be certain that the Lord will make good His threat and will accomplish His purposes as set forth in these oracles. In chapters 15 and 16 an oracle relating to Moab, one of the enemies of Israel, is found. Chapter 17 contains a marvelous prediction concerning Damascus, and in 18 appears an oracle against Ethiopia. (This chapter has been misunderstood as referring to the United States, but, when the facts are examined, no evidence is found for such an identification.) In chapter 19 is an oracle concerning Egypt which has been fulfilled, up to verse 15 at least; but the message concerning the altar to Jehovah and the pillar mentioned in verse 19 has never been fulfilled. (This verse has been interpreted as referring to the pyramid. Such a position is untenable because the pyramid was hoary with age in Isaiah's day, whereas the altar and the pillar were future from his point of view. It is, therefore, erroneous to interpret this prophecy as referring to the great pyramid.) In chapter 20 appears an oracle concerning Egypt and Ethiopia. Several short oracles are found in chapter 21. Another one relating to Jerusalem especially appears in chapter 22, whereas the next one, in chapter 23, relates to Tyre, which was at that time the mart of the world.

Chapters 24-27 are known as the "little apocalypse of Isaiah." In these chapters the prophet looks beyond the borders of the surrounding nations and views the world situation in the end-time. Thus in chapter 24 we find one of the most vivid, graphic pictures of the Tribulation, followed by the incarceration of Satan and his hosts and the reign of Messiah in

Jerusalem. In verses 14-16a is a prediction of the mighty revival that will sweep the world and bring myriads of souls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. In chapter 26:9 we are told that, when God's judgments are in the world, the inhabitants thereof learn righteousness. In 27:2-6 is a wonderful prediction of Israel's filling the earth with fruit in the great Millennial Age.

The fourteenth year of Hezekiah was indeed a critical one. The predictions found in chapters 28:1-35:10 should be read in the light of the historical facts found in Kings and Chronicles. In the dark days of the Assyrian aggression Isaiah stood almost alone against forming alliances of any kind with heathen powers.

The historical section of the book, 36:1-39:8, likewise is very illuminating. This portion gives a clear insight into the political situation in which Hezekiah found himself. Certain of these chapters taken from II Kings throw a very brilliant light upon the times.

The last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, as stated above, reach the highest pinnacles of prophecy. Chapter 40 is acknowledged to be one of the greatest documents in existence today, even when judged purely from the literary standpoint. On account of the limited space for that discussion, I could not dwell upon the fact of the greatness of Messiah, who is the Creator of the universe and whose omniscience and omnipotence are set forth in verses 12-17. He is indeed King of kings and Lord of lords. Nations are as nothing before Him. They are counted by Him as less than nothing, and vanity. They are as small dust of the balances. The princes of the earth and the mighty ones have not taken root in the earth, but, when righteousness and justice demand that any aggressor be plucked up, this mighty, coming Messiah, the strong Son of God, will do so. There is no king who is saved by a multitude of a host. A horse is a vain thing for safety—when men are not on God's side, when they go contrary to His will (Psalm 33:13-19), when therefore men or nations find themselves morally and spiritually out of step with God, it is for them to repent, turn back to Him, and call upon Him through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, for deliverance. When they thus turn to Him in genuine faith, and when He has accomplished His purpose by allowing any deserved catastrophe to come upon the world, He will hear and will deliver. May all the freedom-loving nations of the world realize that deliverance comes from the strong Son of God alone, whose coming to take the reins of government in His hands is speedily drawing near. We have already had the signs of the times indicating this mighty crisis.

In the latter half of Isaiah we meet several "servant" passages. For instance, see 41:8ff; 42:1ff; 44:1-4; 50:4ff; and 52:13-53:12. The word "servant" in Isaiah is used with three different meanings. Sometimes it refers to the nation of Israel, as in 41:8, but in verse 9 it is narrowed down to indicate the faithful remnant of Israel in the future. In 42:1f the servant is none other than the Messiah. In 44:1 the national aspect appears, but this fades into that of the faithful remnant in verses 3-5. The servant in chapters 49, 50, 52 and 53 without doubt is the Lord Jesus Christ. One must examine each context to determine its special meaning in a given case. In the latter half of the Book of Isaiah the entire thought is focused upon the future with very few exceptions. Heathen nations look back to the past as the time of their golden eras. Israel could look only to slavery in her past, but she looks forward to a glorious consummation in the future. When she acknowledges her sin and returns to God, He will make good all the promises uttered by Isaiah and His other messengers.

THE GREAT INDICTMENT

Chapter 1

"The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Isa. 1:1). From this statement we see that the ministry of Isaiah fell within the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. According to the usually received chronology, Isaiah's ministry fell in the latter half of the eighth century before Christ. It is quite probable that his ministry began during the latter years of the reign of Uzziah and continued into the reign of Hezekiah. History, we are told, repeats itself. There was a period of prosperity which Judah enjoyed during the time of Uzziah, but this period was followed by a spiritual decline which brought about disastrous results in the succeeding reigns. Sin never pays.

One should read the historical accounts of the times found in II Kings 17:13—20:21, II Chronicles, chapter 32, and the historical section of Isaiah, chapters 36 to 39 inclusive. The passage in II Kings is very much like the historical portion of Isaiah. It has been suggested that probably the sacred writer of the account found in Kings took over his material relating to the times of the prophet from the Book of Isaiah. ¹

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isa. 1:2). The prophet's message was of paramount importance. In a dramatic manner, therefore, he called upon the heavens and the earth as he delivered faithfully the word of God to His disobedient people. When God or one of His messengers speaks, it is time for men to stop, to listen, and to give heed.

The words, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me," are indeed heart-rending. We learn from Isaiah 43:1 that God created this nation and formed it into a political unity in order that it might give forth its corporate testimony to the existence and the revelation of the living God. The Almighty, the God of Israel, declared that He had nourished and brought up children. Of course He was speaking in terms of a mother and father who provide the necessary food, sustenance, and protection for their children. All good parents endeavor to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. God from time to time sent prophets to Israel who pointed out the straight and the narrow way in which His people should go. There was nothing lacking in Israel which she needed in her daily life or spiritual activities. God amply supplied her with everything—all things that pertain to life and godliness. Notwithstanding this fact the people of Israel did not live up to their advantages and opportunities. They remind one of many families today. The parents provide all the necessities of life for their children and instruct them in the way of the Lord, trying to guide them in the path in which they should go. But in spite of their sincere efforts, the children, giving heed to false teachings and influences of others, depart from the way in which they should go. This is one of the tragedies of life. It is the duty of parents to do all that they can to have their children go in the right way. If they have lived consistent lives and have taught them properly, they are clear of the responsibility, and the children alone will have to answer to God for departing from the way of life. One is reminded in this connection of Eli and Samuel.

Both of these men were true, godly individuals. Eli, however, did not rear his sons as he should. Samuel did the best he could for his children. The boys of both of these men became wicked. God, however, held Eli responsible for the condition of his sons but did not reprimand Samuel for the delinquencies of his sons. God knows where the responsibility lies.

¹ I am perfectly aware of the controversy which has long raged in critical circles in regard to these two historical sections appearing in Isaiah and in the Kings' account. Critics have created more difficulties than they have solved. It is best for us to accept these records as the word of the living God, as indeed they are, receiving the blessings which result from a faithful reading and acceptance of His revelation, and thus be used of God for His glory.—D.L.C.

According to verse 3, Israel was not using the common judgment of a dumb brute. Both the ox and the ass know their stall and the master's crib. Every farmer and cattle-raiser knows that their livestock remember the place and the time when they are fed and that they will be on hand every time. God had fed Israel and had protected her. Naturally if she used the common judgment of the dumb brute, she would have been faithful and true to Him. The Lord promised through Moses (Lev., chap. 26) that if she would be faithful to Him, He would keep her in the land, provide her with all the necessities of life, and never allow any soldier to cross her frontiers; but she would not hearken; therefore she has had the most checkered career of any nation upon the face of the globe and is suffering today as no other people ever have. But Israel is not the only one who does not know from whom her sustenance comes. Unfortunately, the nations of the world do not recognize their utter dependence upon God. He could withhold the crops, or send a pestilence, and they would be utterly at His mercy. At times He does withhold the rain and visits them with different plagues as He did to Israel in olden days. On this point read carefully Amos, chapter 4. Nevertheless, the nations of today, like Israel of old, pay little attention to God's providential care and protection over them but seek a way out of their difficulties themselves, not realizing that *it is in God* in whom they live, move, and have their continual being. Not only is this true of nations as groups, but it is also true of individuals—even many Christians do not seem to recognize the fact that we are utterly dependent upon God for our daily food, life, and protection.

Since Israel did not know nor consider, she was in a terrible position. The prophet therefore spoke to her, addressing her as a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly" (vs. 4). Moreover, he charged them with having forsaken Jehovah and having "despised the Holy One of Israel." He therefore declared, "they are estranged *and gone backward*" — backslidden. Whenever men and women will not give heed to God but feel that they are themselves able to make their own way through the world, they lose their bearings, stray into sin and forbidden paths, and soon become laden with iniquity. Thus they become identified with evildoers and corrupt people. When sin enters the life, one begins to hate God and despise Him and His holiness.

By their continuing in their sinful course, they made it necessary for God to send one judgment after another upon them and to ask, "Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint" (vs. 5). One cannot rid himself of God by simply refusing to retain Him in his knowledge and going on in his own willful course. The Almighty sees and knows everything and deals with everyone according to the merits of his particular case. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews in speaking of God called Him, "the one with whom we have to do." There is no such thing as one's escaping dealing with God. Sooner or later one will have to come face to face with reality and with his Maker. Wisdom would dictate to one to be faithful and true to God at all times and to enjoy His blessings.

In verse 6, the prophet compared the nation of Israel to a person who had become infected with disease, that had entered all parts of the body, saying, "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; *but* wounds, and bruises, and fresh stripes: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with oil." The disease which was affecting Israel at that time was the loss of a sense of God's presence, a dead, formalistic religion, the lowering of the moral standards, and a desire to live on a worldly plane. With all these deadly spiritual germs preying upon the body politic, the prophet could truly say that "there is no soundness in it," and that none of the wounds and sores could be healed or mollified with anything that man could do.

In verse 7 Isaiah spoke of the desolate condition of the land and the destroyed cities, together with the presence of foreigners or strangers who were there simply for the purpose of loot. Jerusalem, in verse 8, is compared to a booth in a vineyard or lodge in a garden of cucumbers. When one looks at the historical account, one sees that the Assyrians had overrun the entire country, according to the Assyrian records had captured forty-six of the fortified cities of Judah, and had overrun the entire land, Jerusalem alone standing out in defiance of the wicked oppressor. This condition into which the country had fallen was in the prophet's mind when he compared Jerusalem to the lodge in a garden of cucumbers.

In verse 9, the prophet spoke for the first time of the *remnant*, which doctrine appears to be a favorite with him. The Lord always has His eye upon the godly who are seeking to do His will and who will not conform to the evils of the day. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him (II Chron. 16:9). It was that way in Isaiah's day; it is that way today. The faithful people of God are the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13). The loyal remnant in Israel of Isaiah's day was the salt of the earth then, on account of which God spared the stroke of judgment which would have blotted the nation from the face of the globe. The prophet therefore declared that if God had not had that small remnant, the nation would "have been as Sodom ..." and "like unto Gomorrah." The people of the world today, the ones in our country, do not realize that they owe their existence and all that they have and hope to have to the presence of Christians in their midst. The true servants of God are the grains of salt in any country—the preserving power.

In verses 10-17, we find Isaiah upbraiding the nation for engaging in a cold, formal, ritualistic worship, while the lives of both the leaders and the people were at the lowest ebb possible. He spoke of the rulers of Israel as "ye rulers of Sodom." Moreover he called the people, "ye people of Gomorrah." This is not simply poetical language. These words speak of a stern reality. God would never have compared their rulers to the leaders of Sodom and the people to those of Gomorrah if they had not been like them in their lives and conduct. People living as these were could not of course serve God in an acceptable manner.

The Lord therefore asked them what was their idea concerning His attitude toward their worship. Moreover, He declared that He had "had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts." He told them that He delighted "not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats"; nor in their feasts, their solemn assemblies, their sabbaths. It was impossible for men, laden with iniquity and sin, to worship God in an acceptable manner. He asked them, "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies, — I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting." God never told them to continue in their religious services while their lives were immoral and corrupt.

Some critics have inferred from the strong language of Isaiah that he was condemning all sacrifices and ceremonies such as those practiced by the Jews. They think that Israel adopted her system of sacrifices and her ritualistic service from heathen people and that Isaiah was condemning her having done this. Moreover, they assert that Micah likewise condemned all offerings, sacrifices, and ceremonies such as the Jews practiced. In this connection, they turn to Jeremiah 7 and assert that this prophet likewise condemned all ceremonialism.

When all the facts of each case are examined, one will see that these prophets were not condemning the ritualistic services which Israel received from God through Moses at Mount Sinai.

The sacrificial services of the Tabernacle and Temple, together with all of its ritualism, had a typical significance. They were shadows of Christ and the Christian verities. When one understands the services, especially that which pertained to the five sacrifices and the ritualism of the Day of Atonement, and then studies the life of Christ, especially His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, one will see that the death of Christ and His atonement were exactly that which was prefigured by the Mosaic ritual. The correspondence is so very accurate and perfect that there is but one conclusion to be drawn, which is that Moses spoke by inspiration and outlined a system which foreshadowed exactly the realities that we have through the atoning blood of our Lord and His resurrection. The correspondence between the ritualism of Israel and the realities under Christ is absolute proof of the divine origin of the entire revelation of God.

To his fellow-countrymen, the Prophet Isaiah appealed, saying: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless,

plead for the widow," (vss. 16-17). In order to understand this language, one must realize that Isaiah was speaking to people who were under law and whose worship consisted largely of ceremonialism given by divine inspiration. Whenever they had become unclean in any ceremonial way, they engaged in the ceremonials that were prescribed. Of course, only those who took life seriously and the worship of God as a matter of first importance did submit to the ritualism and adhere strictly to the requirements of the Lord. When, however, the earnest souls, under conviction of failures and sins, did engage in the ceremonials prescribed by the law, God honored their faith, love, and devotion to Himself. When they thus approached Him, they were clean ceremonially and were restored to full fellowship in the community and with the Lord.

Let no one think that by the performance of any ritualistic worship and service he can cleanse himself and be restored to fellowship with God, for such is not the case. During the old dispensation, God passed over the sins of the devout people in Israel for the time being—when they had performed the proper ritualism; but those sins of the conscientious ones were blotted out by the blood of Calvary, as we see in Romans 3:21-26. Thus the devout Israelites who engaged in these ceremonies were cleansed legally and ceremonially, but their *real* cleansing and the blotting out of their sins were accomplished at Calvary.

Isaiah gave the only instructions to His people possible at that day and time. He had to speak in terms of law, "Wash you, make you clean." They carried out these injunctions when they made their proper sin offerings and trespass offerings on the annual Day of Atonement. The sins of the genuinely penitent ones were rolled forward a year. As said before, the sins of such people were eternally removed by the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:25,26).

The prophet urged the people to reform, having gotten right with God by the proper sacrifices. They were commanded to: "Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." There can be no doubt that God did supply strength to the sincere honest ones who took Him seriously and who endeavored to follow out the instructions commanded here. God would not mock any man, requiring him to do something which he could not do. Hence, when the Lord said to those people who offered their proper sacrifices in sincerity and truth to quit their evils, He tacitly promised to give the necessary spiritual strength to carry out the command—otherwise the Lord would have been mocking poor, frail, mortal beings. Since God would not do that, we may be absolutely certain that in their case, as in our own, "God's commandings are His enablings."

God has a certain standard of morals and ethics. These contain the highest ideals of righteousness, justice, and truth. He instructs His people who are serving him and who are putting their trust in Him to live in accordance with these high ethical principles. He commanded Israel to do this; He urges us to do the same today. We are in the world, but are not of it. We who are His servants are to offer our bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto Him, which is our spiritual or reasonable service. (Rom. 12:1).

The Lord is reasonable in all that He does and in all that He requires of men. In gentleness and in kindness the Prophet Isaiah, speaking for the Lord, appealed to his people, saying, "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." One by his reason cannot find God, for without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing to Him. He who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him (Heb. 11:6). On the other hand, the religion of God, though not contrary to reason, cannot be comprehended by pure, logical processes. Figuratively speaking, the road to God and in His service has several chasms which cannot be spanned by logical reasoning, but they must be crossed by pure faith in God and His Word, and in His goodness, love, and mercy. Faith will enable us to cross these chasms and take our stand on the solid facts of reason and historical data. As we journey along through life there come times when we reach a place in the pathway when our logical powers cannot put us over some difficult place. We therefore must in humble, simple, childlike faith look up into the face of our Father and plead for deliverance. He will never fail.

The course which Israel was pursuing was unreasonable in every particular. Everyone who will face the facts as they were will admit this. The prophet was therefore correct in asking his contemporaries to come, sit down with him, and talk in a rational, sane manner about the way they were doing and how they should act. God makes the same appeal to people today. May we recognize this fact, meditate before God, talk to Him, and let Him talk to us. Thus we can reason together. If we lay our problems before Him in earnest, sincere, believing prayer, He speaks to us through His Word and through providential circumstances. By meditating upon providential circumstances and upon His Word, we can arrive at sane, sound, sensible conclusions.

The mercy of the Lord shows forth in a luminous manner in the promise that the prophet made to Israel: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God is eager to blot out our sins. No matter how dark they may be, He is very eager to forgive them. But He must be just at the time that He justifies one. Because of this fundamental characteristic of the Divine Being—His holiness—He has provided an atonement for us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If one's sins, which are as scarlet or as red as crimson, are to be washed and made white as wool, one must accept Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, bringing Him to God as his offering of atonement in the spirit of the song, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, O Lamb of God, I come." He who comes to Christ, the Lord will in nowise cast out.

According to verse 19 of our chapter, God promised them, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." God has always held that promise out to Israel. He still offers it to her. But she must be willing and obedient in order to enjoy the promised blessing. On the other hand, Isaiah warned them that if they refused and rebelled, the sword would come upon them, and they would be devoured. We know from the sequel of the story that they did not turn from their sins but continued in them and the sword did come upon the land in the form of the great Assyrian invasion which devastated the country. Later it fell upon the land in the form of the Babylonian armies which brought about the captivity.

In verses 21-23, the prophet exclaimed: "How is the faithful city become a harlot! she that was full of justice! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers." In this verse the prophet compared the nation and the Holy City to a woman who was once pure and chaste but now has become infamous and a harlot. This language, of course, speaks of the Hebrew people and their capital city in terms of the waywardness of a fallen woman. Speaking in literal terms, the prophet declared that her princes were rebellious, and companions of thieves, and that every one of them loved bribes and followed after rewards. Moreover, they did not champion the cause of the fatherless and the widow—one thing which God emphasized when He gave His law.

The prophet, with a long range vision, as the context indicates, foresaw the time when God would avenge Himself of His adversaries and cleanse and purge all wickedness and sin from the Chosen People. "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies; and I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy tin ..." (vss. 24-25). When we read this scripture in the light of parallel passages, we see that the time of purging of all the dross from Israel is called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7). This is the time which we Christians call the Tribulation Period, during which God will send His judgments upon the world and will purge out all the wickedness and rebellion in order that He may establish His reign of righteousness upon the earth.

According to verse 26, God promised to restore judges as at first and counsellors as at the beginning. After that Jerusalem shall be known as "The city of righteousness, a faithful town." In the next verse the prophet declared that, "Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and her converts with righteousness." God will be just and righteous in His restoring Israel. When we see this statement, we learn that we must read it in the light of such a passage as Romans 3:21-26:

But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that

believe; for there is no distinction; 23 for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; 24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 whom God set forth *to be* a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; 26 for the showing, *I say*, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.

There is but one way that Israel can be redeemed with justice. God's justice demands the destruction of all the wicked from the borders of Israel. His righteousness requires that the remnant be justified by their having faith in their Redeemer. God will be just when He justifies the one believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 27 finds its complete explanation in the quotation from Romans just given.

According to verse 28, God will destroy all transgressors and sinners together, as mentioned above. Regardless of how prosperous the wicked in Israel may be and how much they may appear like the towering oak, they shall fade and their glory shall pass away and all their belongings will be destroyed. God alone at that time will be exalted in the earth. Israel, purged, cleansed, and purified, will be restored to her rightful position as the head of the nations (Deut. 28:13).

The reader is urged, if he has not already done so, to read this first chapter of Isaiah, asking God to help him to live in such close touch with the Lord and to walk with Him by faith so that his life may reflect the glory of God and Christ. If one will thus live day by day, one will become a great soul-winner and a worker for God.

JERUSALEM PURGED BY JUDGMENT AND BLESSED

Chapters 2,3,4

The second recorded sermon of Isaiah appears as chapters 2, 3, and 4 of his book. These chapters must be studied as a whole. He began his sermon with a vision of Jerusalem as the capital of the earth during the Millennial Age and concluded it with a like vision recorded in chapter 4. Between these glimpses of glory, he spoke of the corrupt customs and manners which had been imported into the country from foreign, pagan lands. Then he foretold the terrific judgments of the great day of Jehovah when every high thing that is exalted against God will be brought low, and when God alone shall be exalted. This prediction is followed by a description of the low spiritual, ethical, and moral tone of the people of Israel during the time of the Tribulation. We might compare the first and last visions of this sermon to mountain peaks and the material presented in the body of the sermon to the valley separating them.

In Isaiah 2:1-4 the prophet described a vision which was granted him by the Lord and which pertained to Judah and Jerusalem. It is important that we understand that this was a *revelation* granted the prophet by the Lord.

From verse 2 we see that the vision pertained to Israel in the period of "the latter days." All students of prophecy know that "the latter days," mentioned fourteen times in the Old Testament, refers to the period beginning with the first appearance of Messiah on the earth and continuing so long as the sun, moon, and earth endure. The vision given in these verses therefore falls somewhere within this period. Isaiah did not tell us the exact time, but from other scriptures we gather this information.

The prophet was shown a vision of "the mountain of Jehovah's house" in Jerusalem as it shall be in the great Kingdom Age. The prophets constantly spoke of the Temple as "the house of Jehovah." It was erected on Mount Moriah, which is in the southeast portion of the city. When the Israelites thought of going to "the house of God," they sometimes spoke of their journey as being to the "mountain of Jehovah's house."

Thus the word "mountain" here refers to the literal Mount Moriah upon which the Temple was located. At the present time it is the lowest of the four hills upon which Jerusalem is built. But when this vision of Isaiah is fulfilled, it will be exalted above all of the other hills and will be the center of attraction in Jerusalem at that time.

The prophet saw Jerusalem as the metropolis of the entire world to which the people of all nations will flow as a continual stream. According to this prediction pilgrimages will be made by the peoples of the earth to visit Jerusalem in order to see the wonders of its glories and to hear the God of Jacob, our Lord Jesus, proclaiming the Word of God. When He was here nineteen hundred years ago, He taught, speaking as never man spoke. When He returns, He will reign in Jerusalem and will likewise teach it. Probably this expression refers to the religious and spiritual instructions which He will give.

In addition to this the law also will go forth from Jerusalem. This doubtless refers to the legal enactments which will govern the nations upon the earth during the Millennium. Of course the peoples will have to be governed by laws and regulations then as now. Although the devil will not be here at that time, men who are still in the flesh, as the people in the Millennial Age will be, will have to be governed by laws.

The people who go up to Jerusalem and thus hear the teaching of Jesus and see the glories of His kingdom will return to their homes and insist upon their neighbors making a pilgrimage to the Holy City to enjoy the blessed benefits which they themselves have already experienced upon their first visit there.

When this vision is fulfilled, the era for which the world is yearning and longing will have dawned; for we are told that at that time, "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4). Instead of

being employed for, bloodshed, and carnage, all the metals that are now used in forging the instruments of death will be converted into agricultural tools and industrial machinery to produce implements for peaceful pursuits.

At that time there will be no armies, no navies, nor air forces; no training of men for combat service. Peace and the recognition of the rights of others will be the order of the day.

There will arise of course disputes between nations or groups of people and between individuals, but no resort will be made to force in order to settle any questions. All international controversies will be decided by Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ. We who are now members of His body and who will receive our glorified bodies at the rapture of the church will reign with Him and will assist in the government of the world during the great Millennial Age. We shall judge the nations and shall even judge angels. All disputes and controversies will be settled in the courts of the land by the righteous, redeemed saints of God. At that time every man will dwell under his own vine and fig tree and no one will make another afraid. The prophets and the psalmists constantly spoke and sang of this glorious era of the future.

In Isaiah 2:5-11 the prophet reprimanded the people of his day for importing foreign customs and manners into the country of Israel. In verse 5 he addressed the house of Jacob and urged them to come "... and ... walk in the light of Jehovah." He then declared that they, the house of Jacob, had "forsaken thy people the house of Jacob." How could this be? The "house of Jacob" which they had forsaken was Israel as she was at the beginning of her national history when she was free from the contaminating customs of the nations. The "house of Jacob" whom he reprimanded was the people of his own generation who had forsaken the right ways of the Lord and had gone after the customs of the people round about them.

We remember that in the days of Samuel the people wanted to be like the nations around them. They therefore clamored for a king. Samuel warned them of the dangers toward which they were heading and pleaded with them not to take the fatal step. Notwithstanding his earnestness and the reasonableness of his plea, the people still insisted vehemently that they should have a king and be like the nations.

When the children of Israel had achieved their desire, they, figuratively speaking, opened the floodgates for the introduction of all kinds of customs and foreign practices. When Solomon mounted the throne, Israel took a terrible plunge toward the depths of heathenism. It was his policy to establish friendly relations with various nations by marital alliances. When he did that and brought his many wives to Jerusalem, they came with their heathen ideas, pagan gods, and corrupt practices, which were never eliminated thoroughly from the lives of the people of Israel.

From verse 6 of chapter 2 we see that soothsaying was introduced from Philistia and various customs from the East. Commercial relations were established with foreigners. Israel did indeed become unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Because of foreign trade and commerce the land was full of silver and gold, great riches, and treasures. The Israelites were engaged in the buying and selling of horses and chariots, notwithstanding the fact that God warned them through Moses (Deut., chap. 17) that no king who sat upon the throne in Israel should engage in the traffic of horses and chariots.

From verse 8 we see that idolatry was being practiced freely in Israel. Isaiah, especially, had to contend with his brethren who were inclined to go off into idolatry.

According to 2:9 the prophet saw the judgment of God resting upon the whole country because of their sin and their disloyalty to the Lord. In this prediction he foresaw the man of the street—"the mean man"—bowed down under the load of judgment. At the same time he saw the influential, prominent citizen—"the great man"—likewise brought low because of his sin. Since they were not willing to turn to God, the prophet prayed, "... therefore forgive them not."

He looked out into the future and foresaw the strokes of judgment which would descend upon them from Almighty God, falling thick and fast. He therefore exhorted them saying, "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of his majesty." Knowing the terrific judgment that will come upon Israel in the end-time, he advised them to seek shelter by running into the rocks and the holes of the earth. By this exhortation he did not mean to imply that they could actually escape the judgment of God in any such manner as this. His language here is entirely different from that found in 26:20. At that time the lofty looks of men shall be brought low and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, but the Lord Jehovah alone will be exalted in that day.

The great day of Jehovah, which is the Tribulation Period, is described in Isaiah 2:12-22. The prophets constantly foretold this day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. Joel, one of the earliest writing prophets, spoke in the most graphic manner in the second and third chapters of his prophecy concerning this period. Amos also described this time of judgment. Zephaniah and Zechariah also foretold it. The Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew, chapters 24 and 25—the Olivet Discourse—enlarged upon it. In Revelation, chapters 6-19, we find the fullest description of the judgments of the great day of Jehovah.

Let us now notice what Isaiah says about this period. According to 2:12-16 everything that man considers as great and of value will be completely destroyed. Among the things that are mentioned are the proud and haughty. God has declared, from time to time, that He resists such and gives grace to the humble. There is no occasion for man's thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think. Men, in the end of this age—especially in the Tribulation—who will be under the complete domination and sway of Satan, will feel their importance and will even defy the God of heaven. According to Psalm 74 there will be certain anti-Semites who will commit every depredation they can against the Jews and who will be the enemies of God Almighty himself. These arrogant ones will therefore be brought very low. The things that are considered of great value are spoken of in terms of the cedars of Lebanon and the oaks of Bashan. In the ancient East the cedars of Lebanon were considered the choicest of trees. Likewise the oaks of Bashan were thought of in like manner. Thus, under these two symbols, the prophets included all those things which man prizes most highly. These will come under the mighty stroke of the judgment of God during the Tribulation. Everything that is lifted up, the lofty towers and fortified cities, will be razed to the ground.

Mention is made of "the ships of Tarshish." Though there is a controversy as to the significance of this name, the evidence seems to point in the direction that Tarshish is none other than Great Britain. The ships of Tarshish are also mentioned in Psalm 48. In this passage they refer to warships. In Isaiah, chapter 60, we again see the ships of Tarshish, which are, as we learn from the context, undoubtedly the British merchant marine. From these and a few other passages I conclude that the British navy and the merchant marine will survive the ordeals of history until the time here foreseen. It is quite likely that the ships mentioned in 2:16 are none other than those of the navy and not the merchant marine. My reason for this position is that, according to Psalm 48, these ships of Tarshish are destroyed at the very end of the Tribulation. The ones mentioned in the passage in Isaiah, chapter 2, are likewise destroyed in the day of Jehovah. I therefore conclude that the prophet was speaking of warships.

During the Tribulation the haughty and proud will bow down under the mighty strokes of God's judgment and will be brought very low. At that time the idols shall utterly pass away, not only from Israel but from the entire world. It is true that Israel was largely cured of idolatry during the Babylonian Captivity; nevertheless, according to Zechariah 13:1-6, there will be a revival of necromancy and fortune telling in Israel. Again, according to Zechariah, chapter 10, there will also be a revival of idolatry in Palestine at that time.

When the judgments of the Tribulation begin to fall, the godless men will become terrified and will run into the rocks of the earth, into caves and holes, and as we learn from the Book of Revelation, will cry out to the rocks and mountains to

fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of God and the face of the Lamb, for they will realize that the time in which they will then be living will be nothing less than the great day of Jehovah.

At that time idolatry will be swept from the face of the globe. Men will cast away their idols of silver and gold which they have made to worship. They will realize that the crisis of the ages is upon them, and that the majesty of Jehovah will soon become manifest to all flesh. The prophet therefore called upon the people saying, "Cease ye from man"—that is, the ways of men—and serve God (Isa. 2:22).

In the first three verses of chapter 3 the prophet foretold the time when God will take away the stay of bread and water. Since, in the preceding section, he was talking about the day of Jehovah, it is quite evident that he is still speaking of this same time. The withholding of grain and water from the people is in perfect accord with a similar prediction found in Joel concerning the same time. The people are utterly dependent upon God for water and for food. Man can plant and water, but God alone gives the increase.

At that time the Lord will also take away "the mighty man, and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the diviner, and the elder; the captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the expert artificer, and the skilful enchanter." The "mighty man" here is the great soldier. According to this prediction there will be, at the time here foreseen, no great Jewish military men to help her defend the country. Moreover there will be no judges, prophets, diviners, or elders, who will be able, by wise counsel, to direct the affairs of the nation. Even petty officers will be lacking at that time. Outstanding men of influence, power, and prestige also will be removed from the stage of action. No one will be wise enough to counsel the nation as to how it shall proceed in such a crisis as will obtain at that time. Moreover skilled workmen will have been removed from the nation. In other words, the country will be suffering from possibly the severest famines that it has ever experienced. Moreover the leadership of the nation, in all callings of life, will have vanished from Israel. On the contrary the land will be in the hands of the youths, for in verse 4 we are told, "And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them." Since all the older and wiser men of the time will either have died or fled from the country, only the younger generation, inexperienced and lacking knowledge, will direct the affairs of the country—only to wreck and ruin.

According to the next prediction the land will be gripped by a reign of terror—a situation similar to the time of the judges—when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. "And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor: the child shall behave himself proudly against the old man, and the base against the honorable." At that time the rising generation will feel that the older ones are years behind the times and that they only are abreast of events and know how to deal with the situation confronting them. Thus they behave themselves proudly against the older ones. When this condition arises in Israel, deplorable days will come.

At the time here foreseen, we are told that one man will take another of his father's house and insist that he assume the leadership and bear the responsibility for the wreck and ruin that is certain to come upon the nation. This prediction shows that the situation in Israel in the time of the Tribulation will become desperate—without any hope of recovery. Hence there will be those in the ranks who will push others forward and make them assume the leadership in order that the impending ruin may come under their management.

But why does God say that all this ruin will come to Israel? The answer to this question is found in verses 8 and 9: "For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against Jehovah, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The show of their countenance doth witness against them: and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have done evil unto themselves." Men cannot sin with impunity. Every transgression has a just recompense of reward. Israel has had the light of the revelation of God and has known His will. Notwithstanding that fact she, according to this prophecy, with her tongue and with her deeds will act against God and

will provoke Him to jealousy. Sin stamps itself upon one's countenance. Wrongdoing always leaves its mark upon him who commits it. "Sin will out." In verse 10 of chapter 3 there is a special message to the righteous of that day: "Say ye of the righteous, that *it shall be* well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and His ears are open unto their supplication. God will never forsake His people. Although they may have trials, the Lord will be with them in such difficulties and will deliver them—provided they are trusting in Him.

On the other hand, a woe is pronounced upon the wicked for "... *it shall be* ill with him: for what his hands have done shall be done unto him." In other words, he shall reap what he has sown. This warning is found in Isaiah 3:11. Let not man deceive himself. "... God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

According to Isaiah 3:12, the younger generation will oppress the people and women will manipulate affairs of the government. The prophet therefore exclaimed, "O my people, they that lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths." Turning directly to the leaders of the people of Israel, the prophet threatened them with the judgments of Almighty God. His specific charge against them is found in these words: "It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses: what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts" (vss. 14,15). The vineyard here is, as we shall see from chapter 5, the Jewish people. The leaders are accused of eating the vineyards. This statement simply means that they oppress the people, extort from them unjust revenues, and do not perform their duties as public officials. The taxation and the restrictions which they lay upon the people thus grind them to powder, as it were, while they, that is, the leaders, cause all the wealth to gravitate toward themselves. The rulers shall therefore come face to face with an angry God and shall have the sentence of judgment passed upon them for such conduct. This statement is true not only with reference to the leaders of Israel but to those public officials of all nations who abuse the rights and prerogatives of their offices.

The prophet gave us one of the most vivid pictures of the Jewish women during the time of the Tribulation which can be found anywhere (3:16-26). In this paragraph he addressed the "daughters of Zion." This expression always refers to the Jewish women. But the term in the singular always refers to all the population of Jerusalem. From this vivid description we can see the many articles that will enter into the wardrobe of these rich, idle, indolent women in Israel in the time of the end. In this connection let me say that had the prophet been speaking of the women of America or of any of our western countries, he would have spoken in the same strain—provided they were living in the same wanton way, indifferent to spiritual realities.

In chapter 4, verse 1, we see a very strange prediction. Here we are told that "... seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name; take thou away our reproach." This little prediction seems to speak volumes with reference to the morals and ethics that will be the order of the day. Moreover there is reflected in it possibly the prediction that the men in large numbers will be swept from the boundaries of Israel. How this will be done no one so far as I know can tell. It may be by various judgments from the Lord or by war. Nevertheless the women will predominate in Israel at the time here foreseen. Laying aside all the high, ethical standards which demand that every man shall have his own wife and every woman her own husband, these women will flaunt that divine injunction and will engage in "barnyard" morals. Think of it! Seven women wanting to live with one man and support themselves—if he will agree to it. Unfortunately I feel certain that the men—at least the bulk of them—will be willing to assent to such a proposition as this. But, on the other hand, I feel absolutely certain that there will be those in Israel and in other nations who will not lower the moral standard, and who will spurn such a proposition as these women will make to the men of that future day. In view of these lowered moral standards one can easily understand why the wrath of God will be poured out upon the people of that generation.

In Isaiah 4:2-6, we have the concluding vision of this marvelous sermon. In verse 2 is a prediction concerning the Messiah who is here called the "branch of Jehovah" and of Him it is said that He will "be beautiful and glorious" to those

that escape in Israel. Many Jewish commentators and all Christian expounders, as far as my knowledge goes, recognize that this is a prediction concerning Messiah, who in other places is called the Branch. He is also called "the fruit of the land." This portion of Isaiah is of course written in poetical form, the fundamental principle of which is Hebrew parallelism. The second line corresponds to the first and explains it. Thus He who is called "the branch" in the first line is called "the fruit of the land" in the other.

According to verses 3 and 4 there will be a remnant that escapes the judgments of the Tribulation. They will be called holy and will be written among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord intends to purge out all the wicked and evil ones from Jewry. When He does, He will be careful to preserve those whose hearts are right and who want to serve the true and living God and be used of Him. When He thus enters into judgment with Israel, He will do it "by the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning." A just and a righteous deal will be given to each individual and the judgments of the time of the Tribulation will fall only upon the wicked. God knows how to deliver the righteous out of every ordeal as the Apostle Peter declared. The Lord will provide defense and food for the righteous in Zion at that time (Isa. 33:13-16).

In verses 5 and 6 we have a marvelous prediction: "And Jehovah will create over the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory shall be *spread* a covering. And there shall be a pavilion for a shade in the day-time from the heat, and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain." According to these verses God will create over the whole habitation of Zion a kind of canopy that will protect it from the sun and from the rain. Zion of course here is none other than the Holy City in Palestine. This covering will be something that will be created over all Jerusalem. There will be nothing like it anywhere else in the world. Zion shall be indeed the joy and praise of the whole earth. The pilgrims who go there to worship Jehovah of hosts and to hear Him preach the Word of God will have an experience such as they cannot enjoy anywhere else in the world. Great and marvelous things are in store for the penitent, believing remnant in Israel. Great and wonderful things are likewise in store for the people who survive the Tribulation Period and who enter into the glorious Kingdom Age.

THE VINEYARD OF JEHOVAH AND ISAIAH'S CALL AND COMMISSION

Chapters 5,6

In the present installment of our studies in Isaiah we shall investigate chapters 5 and 6. The former is the prophet's third recorded sermon. The latter chapter narrates his call and commission.

The Vineyard of Jehovah

In chapter 5 the prophet discussed Israel under the symbolism of a vineyard. He was not the first to make this comparison. Asaph, who wrote Psalm 80, portrayed her in this same manner. The Lord Jesus Christ also compared the nation to a vineyard in Matthew 21:33-46. Isaiah the prophet likened her to a vineyard which will, in the Millennial Age, fill the earth with fruit.

Isaiah in this chapter declared that he intended to sing a song of his Beloved concerning His vineyard. The Beloved here is none other than the Lord and the vineyard, as we see in 5:7, is the people of Israel. In preparation for the planting of the vineyard, the Lord declared that He dugged the land, gathered out the stones, planted it with the choicest vine, built a tower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine press. Thus He spared no effort in His preparation and caring for His vineyard.

Let us note the fact that the Lord procured the *choicest* vine. This statement is equivalent to His declaring that the Jewish people constituted the choicest race. This fact we see when we remember that the Lord performed a biological miracle upon the bodies of Abraham and Sarah. This miracle is called an "act of creation" (Isaiah 43:1). In performing this miracle, the Lord injected new powers, capabilities, and potentialities—both intellectual and spiritual—into the blood stream of the Jewish race. This miracle accounts for Israel's being the choicest vine and for the unprecedented contribution which she has made to the world in every sphere of activity.

In Isaiah 5:3-7 the Lord spoke of His caring for His vineyard and of His expecting it to bear the finest type of grapes. Instead of its yielding luscious fruit, it bore the wild, bitter grapes of "oppression" and a "cry." After God had bestowed so very much labor upon His vineyard, He had a logical right to expect it to bear the very best fruit. Where there is much given much is required.

Inasmuch as the vineyard bore the bitter fruits of oppression and of crying and complaining, there was but one thing which the Lord could do; namely, to bring chastisement and punishment upon His people for their ungodliness. Speaking therefore in terms of a vineyard, He declared: "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor hoed; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (Isa. 5:5-6). The judgment threatened in this language found its fulfillment in God's removing His restraining, protecting hand and His allowing foreign, aggressive powers to invade the country of the Hebrews and to lay it waste. This prediction found a partial fulfillment in the Babylonian invasion of the land and the overthrow of the government; but the complete fulfillment came in the form of the Roman occupation of Palestine in the year 70 A.D. Asaph, in Psalm 80:8-16, foretold at length the same stroke of judgment and of punishment. God, being righteous, just and holy, must punish every transgression and disobedience of His people.

In Isaiah 5:8-30, the prophet spoke more specifically of these sour, bitter, wild grapes borne by the Lord's vineyard. He pronounced a woe upon the various groups constituting the nation. He began by pronouncing a woe upon the rich land owners who were indifferent to the wants and needs of the poorer classes. In verses 8-10 we see that these great landlords were buying up all the property and were reducing the masses of the people to the status of tenants, who could

eke out only a bare subsistence from their laborious cultivation of the soil. As a judgment upon these rich land owners, the Lord foretold that they would harvest no more than seed for another crop—in other words, He would send a famine in the land.

In the next place the prophet condemned the pleasure-loving, God-forsaking masses, who lived for the gratification of their fleshly desires only. According to him they arose in the morning only to drink liquor and inflame themselves with intoxicating beverages late at night. They would assemble in what today would be called night clubs where only music that appeals to the baser part of man's nature would be played. Isaiah's description of this class of people reminds one of the present situation in our country today.

In the next paragraph, verses 13-17, the prophet declared that the Jewish people would go into captivity because of a lack of knowledge and that many of them would die, descending into Sheol. An examination of these verses shows that the prophet was looking out into the far distant future—the Tribulation Period—when the wicked of the people of Israel will descend into Sheol. After the judgments of that time Jehovah of hosts, the Holy One of Israel, alone will be exalted. Then the lambs of His people shall feed in a rich pasture (Isa. 40:11).

In verses 18 and 19 Isaiah pronounced a woe upon those who were of a lawless, wicked disposition. He therefore declared: "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, and sin as it were with a cart rope; that say, Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!" This group of people consisted of blasphemers and atheists. They were out and out criminals, who would resort to any type of deed and to lying in order to carry out their purposes. If any of them did believe in the existence of God, they did not accept the doctrine of His working in history and of His punishing the wicked during life. In a blasphemous way they challenged God to hasten the day of retribution for sin, which the prophet had threatened, as we have just seen in verses 13-17. One can also see reflected in their language the threats of the prophet, who had forewarned them that the counsel of the Holy One would be fulfilled in the form of judgments against their wickedness. They therefore challenged God to let His counsel draw near and come to them in order that they might see that He was something more than a figurehead.

The fourth woe was pronounced upon the class of people who had lost all spiritual perception and were unable to differentiate between good and evil. The preacher therefore declared: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (vs. 20). Sin has a deadening and hardening effect upon the heart of man. As the sense of touch in the hand is deadened and benumbed by hard, tough work, so are the spiritual powers of perception benumbed by one's engaging in sin. The further one goes into sin the less ability one has to discriminate between good and evil. This principle was true in Isaiah's day; it is also true today. Sin, immorality, and wickedness are stalking out in the broad daylight throughout the country. Modesty is almost a thing of the past. The people are becoming blind to the distinction between good and evil, light and darkness. It is a sad day for any nation when it reaches this point. Nothing but the judgment of God can be expected.

In the next place our prophet addressed the conceited people of his day, saying: "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" (vs. 21). A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth—buildeth up. The people of Isaiah's day had acquired some knowledge along certain lines—they probably had advanced educationally beyond the preceding generation. Because of this fact the spirit of conceit seemed to have gripped at least a portion of the nation. They therefore felt that they were wise above all others. Woe unto the person who reaches the point where he thinks he knows everything! He who has such an exalted opinion of his acquisition of knowledge is incapable of being taught. The truly educated person realizes that what he knows is very little in comparison with the vast amount of knowledge with which he is unacquainted. The more he learns, the less he sees he

knows and the more he sees there is to be learned. May the Lord keep us humble and enable us to realize that we know very little and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

The prophet pronounced his last woe upon the public officials of his day who were given to drunkenness. "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink; that justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (vss. 22 and 23). When the law-enforcing officials turn to drunkenness, there is no such thing as one's obtaining justice in any case. In Israel, as we see in this quotation, at least some of the judges had acquired this habit and did in a drunken stupor attempt to perform their duties in the courts of law. Being unprincipled, unscrupulous persons and at the same time under the influence of liquor, they did not hesitate to take bribes. There can be no such thing as justice in the courts of the land under such conditions.

In verses 24 and 25 our bold messenger pronounced a judgment upon the country by comparing it to stubble and dry grass to which fire is put. In other words, he thought of the nation in terms of dry stubble and grass and of a forest fire which would sweep from one end of the country to the other. In this connection he showed the very root of all the evils of which the various groups were guilty; namely, that they rejected the Lord Jehovah and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). God has given man His word to instruct him in the way in which he should go. Whenever men, therefore, discredit the word of the Living God and despise His revelation, there are no restraints left to deter them from pursuing wickedness and sin. God gave His Word to Israel and confirmed it by many infallible proofs. Whenever He raised up a prophet to deliver a message, He gave His servant the ability to perform a miracle which would attest his divine call and commission. Thus the Word of God was confirmed unto the Chosen People. There was therefore no excuse for Israel's having rejected the law or despised the Word which God sent to her. There is no excuse for anyone's rejecting the Bible as the Word of God today. There is absolute and positive proof that it was infallibly inspired. (I have dealt with this thought in my new book, *What Men Must Believe*). The threats contained in these verses found their immediate, fulfillment in the judgment of the overthrow of the nation by the Babylonians; but the complete fulfillment will be accomplished in the Tribulation Period.

This sermon concerning the vineyard of Jehovah ends with a paragraph, verses 26-30, which foretells the final siege and distress of the Jewish people in the Tribulation. "And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss for them from the end of the earth; and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly" (vs. 26). This gathering of the nations against the Jews is a subject of constant discussion by the prophets. Isaiah represented this future judgment as being an irresistible force which none could withstand. In concluding his remarks, he declared that "they shall roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold, darkness *and* distress; and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof" (vs. 30). The time here foreseen will be one of unprecedented distress and sorrow to the people of Israel. The information contained in this prophecy is supplemented by other predictions which show us that, although Israel in and of herself cannot stand against these mighty aggressors, God will supernaturally strengthen the remnant who will retard, and to a certain extent repel, the invader until the Lord Jesus himself appears upon the scene and defeats the enemy (cf. Zech., chap. 14).

Isaiah's Call

In chapter 6 we have a record of Isaiah's official call to the ministry. Before this time he had already delivered his three powerful sermons, which constitute chapters 1-5. We might think of the call recorded in this chapter as one to full-time service. It came in the year that King Uzziah of Judah died. "Where there is no vision the people perish." This statement sets forth a well recognized psychological principle. To most of the prophets God granted visions of Himself, of

His own glory, and of the glories which will obtain in the great Millennial Era. Where the men of God had such experiences, they were spurred on to enthusiastic service in the Master's cause.

In the vision granted him, Isaiah the prophet saw the Lord sitting upon a throne which was high and lifted up. His train filled the temple. Above Him stood seraphim; each had six wings; "With twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (6:2,3).

What temple was this? There is a temple in heaven (Rev. 11:19). There were the Temples of Solomon, of Zerubbabel, of Herod, and there will be the Jewish temple which will stand in Jerusalem during the Tribulation, and the millennial temple which will be built by the Lord Jesus (Zech. 6:12). Of these various sanctuaries, which was the one appearing in our passage? The answer is to be found in John 12:39-41. In this passage John quoted from Isaiah, chapter 6, and declared that the prophet made these predictions because he (Isaiah) saw His glory; and he spake to Him. John therefore interpreted the vision of Isaiah, chapter 6, as one of the Lord Jesus in His glory—the millennial kingdom. This conclusion is confirmed by the clause "The whole earth is full of his glory." The earth will, for the first time, be filled with the glory of the Lord when Jesus returns and sets up His kingdom. Further confirmation of this interpretation is found in the prophet's words: "For mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." There can therefore be no doubt regarding this prophecy's being a prediction of Christ's millennial reign.

Who are the seraphim? There can be no doubt but that they are intelligent beings who worship the triune God. We have another view of these same creatures in Revelation, chapters 4 and 5, where they are called *living creatures*. Each of these has six wings. They sing night and day the same triple holiness—Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts. In the Common Version, however, these living creatures of Revelation are called beasts. This translation of the Greek term is unfortunate. The Revised Version's rendering of *living creatures* is correct. Since the seraphim of Isaiah and the living creatures of Revelation have six wings each, and since they are singing the same words in worship to the triune God, we must conclude that both of these prophets were speaking of the same creatures.

In Isaiah's vision he saw Christ in the millennial Temple which will be in the city of Jerusalem in Palestine, for there our Lord will reign (Zeph. 3:14-17). The vision which John saw, however, was one of the throne of God in heaven. Even though the scenes are entirely different, the living creatures in both instances are the same.

The fact that the triple holiness is sung by these living creatures suggests the idea of the Holy Trinity. The Trinity is taught by Moses and the prophets in various places. They consistently assume the correctness of this teaching—as is here done.

When they sang the foundations of the temple shook. The prophet, seeing the Lord in His majesty and holiness, realized his own sinful condition and cried out: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." This confession is similar to that of Job: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; But now mine eyes seeth thee: Wherefore I abhor *myself*, And repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). The nearer one lives to the Lord, the more sinful does wrong-doing appear to one. The holiest men of God throughout the Old Testament Era were very sensitive to their wrongs and their sins. This fact is seen in the Book of Psalms especially. During the centuries the holiest and most godly men have felt toward their sins just as did Job and Isaiah.

When Isaiah confessed his sins, one of the seraphim that he had seen in the vision flew to the altar, took a live coal in his hand and touched the prophet's mouth saying, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven" (vs. 7). Whenever the saint of God repents of his sins and confesses them, God instantly forgives. This truth is seen in Proverbs 28:13: "He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy." The use of the coal from the altar was a symbolic representation of the cleansing of the

prophet's heart. This act, however, is only a symbol, but it signified reality. The real basis for the forgiveness of sins is the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was typified by the various sacrifices offered at the temple services. Each of those sacrifices laid emphasis upon the shedding of blood and set forth in a particular manner some special phase of our Lord's atonement. Without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22). The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanses us from all sin (I John 1:7).

Having been cleansed of his sins, the prophet was right toward God. His heart was attuned to the Lord. As he stood in readiness for service he heard a voice, saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (6:8). One should notice the plural pronoun *us*. To whom does this word refer? When this passage is studied in the light of others of a similar nature, one cannot avoid the conclusion that *us* in this passage refers to the Holy Trinity. This inference is confirmed by the triple holiness to which we have already given attention. This verse is a record of a conversation held among the persons of the Holy Trinity regarding some special phase of work in the kingdom of God.

Hearing the call, the prophet volunteered immediately. He realized that spiritual values, after all, are the only things that amount to anything in this life. Moreover he realized very keenly his responsibility toward his God and toward men. He therefore responded: "Here am I; send me." He never hesitated for one moment. He did not have to adjust any of his affairs, but was prepared then and there to enter the service of the King. Today God wants volunteers as He did in Isaiah's day. He calls one person to one field of labor and another to an entirely different one. Some are called to labor in the homeland, where-as others are desired for foreign fields. One is qualified for a certain type of service, whereas another is capable of doing an entirely different type of work. "For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chron. 16:9).

Isaiah's Commission

As soon as Isaiah volunteered, the Lord gave him his commission saying, "Go, and tell this people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed" (vss. 9 and 10). Isaiah used that idiom of the Hebrew language which indicated that he was continually to repeat his message until those who were not seeking the will of God would become hardened. The truth, if accepted, will mellow the heart; if it is rejected, it will harden the heart. By thus continually giving the message, the prophet would close the eyes, harden the heart, and stop the ears of those who were disinclined and uninterested. It is the minister's business to preach the message with all the fervency and love of a regenerated heart, pleading with men to accept the truth. But God does not hold one responsible for results. All He asks of us is faithfulness.

To the Lord the prophet responded: "Lord, how long?" Isaiah understood that his ministry, as far as good results were concerned, would not be a great success. He therefore asked how long he would have to continue such seemingly profitless labors. To this query the Lord responded: "Until cities be wasted without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and Jehovah have removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land." It is usually supposed that the prophet began his ministry in the middle of the eighth century B.C., according to the common chronology. This reduction of the country to a condition of desolation occurred about the close of the century. Thus there was something like half a century during which God declared the prophet was to engage in his unappreciated ministry. The true servant of God is to deliver the message in firmness and love—without compromise—regardless of visible outward results.

The prophecy concludes by foretelling that only a remnant would survive. From this minority the stock would be perpetuated. Isaiah, through his ministry—especially the latter part of it—made his teaching center around this doctrine of the remnant. This teaching is also seen in the writings of the other prophets and psalmists.

THE BOOK OF IMMANUEL

Chapters 7-12

Isaiah, chapters 7-12 constitutes what is known by scholars as "The Book of Immanuel." This section forms a literary unit in the writings of Isaiah; and yet the facts show that it is vitally related to the rest of the book. One cannot delete this section without doing violence to the rest. I am calling attention to this fact because the critics make no hesitation in dissecting the marvelous prophecies of Isaiah and assigning them to different authors living at various times. All the evidence proves positively that the entire book of Isaiah constitutes a literary whole.

The Message to Ahaz

The prophecy contained in chapter 7 was probably spoken in 738 B.C., which is, in the correct biblical chronology, 3387 A.H. (Anno Hominis—in the year of man.) The occasion of Isaiah's speaking this prophecy was an impending invasion of the land of Judah by the combined forces of Israel (the northern kingdom) and Syria. Rezin, the king of Syria, had entered into a military alliance with Pekah, the king of Israel. The object of this confederacy was to crush the little kingdom of Judah over which Ahaz was reigning.

Upon receipt of the news that this coalition had been formed against him, Ahaz was terrified, and so were the people of Judah. Isaiah spoke of their fright in the following words: "And his heart trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind" (7:2).

Thereupon the Lord sent Isaiah, together with his little son Shear-jashub, to Ahaz who was inspecting the water system of Jerusalem in preparation for the threatened siege. Isaiah met him at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, which was in the highway of the fuller's field. In other words, he was in the Kidron Valley (east of Mount Moriah, the Temple area) near Gihon. This was the only running water around Jerusalem.

Upon meeting the king, the prophet attempted to comfort him saying, "Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither let thy heart be faint, because of these two tails of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and of the son of Remaliah." Notwithstanding the fact that the combined forces of Israel and Syria were a great menace to the little kingdom of Judah, the prophet assured the frightened king that all would be well with him and the nation—if he would only believe. To show the insignificance of the confederated kingdoms and their impotency to do any harm to Judah, Isaiah called these two hostile kings "these two tails of smoking firebrands."

At this point of the message the prophet revealed to the king that this alliance of the two hostile kings was intended primarily to dethrone him and to set up in Jerusalem their own appointee, "even the son of Tabeel." This plan, the Lord assured the king, would not stand and would never come to pass. Then Isaiah uttered a prophecy concerning the complete overthrow of the kingdom of Israel and that of Damascus within a period of sixty-five years. But Isaiah solemnly warned Ahaz saying, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (vs. 9). *Faith is the one condition of receiving any and all blessings from the Lord.* Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing to God (Heb 11:6).

The prophet seemed to have stopped with this warning and allowed the king to consider the message. Then he broke the silence and spoke again to him saying, "Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above" (vss. 10,11).

The Lord was eager to strengthen the faith of the terrified king. He always wishes to give His best to all of His servants. The children of God are never straitened in Him but are only limited, as were the Corinthians, in themselves. The Lord gave Ahaz the option of naming the place where the miracle should be wrought in order to strengthen his faith. If the king had so desired, God would have performed an actual miracle in the skies; on the other hand, if Ahaz had expressed a desire that one be performed down in the sea, God would have performed it there. In this gracious offer we see an exhibition of God's great concern to assist His people in a time of crisis. My friend, the Lord wants to strengthen your faith and assist you in your efforts to live for Him.

Ahaz, as we learned from the account in Kings and Chronicles, was a contemptible character. The Holy Spirit once spoke of him as "That man Ahaz." True to his character, Ahaz, with a pious air, said in reply to the proffered mercy: "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah" (vs. 12). He became very pious all of a sudden—not wishing to tempt God. This is an instance of holding to the letter and missing the spirit of the law. By accepting the Lord's offer he would not be tempting God—he would only be tasting the Lord and learning that He is good (Ps. 34:8).

When Ahaz thus spurned God's offer of assistance, Isaiah instantly turned from him in contempt and, looking out into the future, addressed the house of David saying, "Hear ye now, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also?" (vs. 13). We must understand that verses 13 and 14 were not addressed to Ahaz, but to the house of David—the entire house, David's posterity in the future. Many of the Davidic kings had been evil and, figuratively speaking, had wearied God. Hence the question.

The Virgin Birth of Messiah Predicted

The prophet then uttered one of the most profound predictions to be found in the Scriptures: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (vs. 14). This passage is a forecast concerning the virgin birth of our Lord. Some of the best manuscripts read "the virgin." The article *the* with this noun indicates a definite, specific virgin—the one who is presupposed in the expression, "the seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15). Matthew applies this passage as a prediction concerning the virgin birth of Jesus (Matt., chap. 1).

In verses 15 and 16 there is a prediction of a child whose birth was to be before the desolation of the kingdoms of Israel and Syria. Some expositors have considered that these verses were speaking of the same child whose birth is foretold in verse 15. The scholars taking this view cannot see in this prediction a prophecy of the Messiah. They overlook one of the fundamental laws of interpretation, which is known as the "law of double reference." The principle involved in this law is the blending of the accounts of two events or persons who are separated by some period of time, and yet the descriptions of the two are blended into a single picture. When one understands this general principle, he can see that verse 14 is speaking of the Messiah's birth and that verses 15 and 16 are talking of another child who was to be born in the near future—closer to Isaiah's day.

In verses 18 and 19 the Lord spoke of the Egyptian forces as if they were a fly and of the Assyrian as a bee. Thus the prophet declared that God would call forth the fly and the bee from Egypt and Assyria and that they would come into the land of Israel and devastate it.

In verse 20, however, the prophet changed his figure and called the king of Assyria the Lord's razor, with which He would shave Israel.

In verses 21-25 Isaiah spoke of the desolation of the land and the removal of the population which would result from the invasion of the country by these foreign forces. From verses 23-25 we learn that the country would grow up as a wilderness and that there would be plenty of pasture for cattle and sheep.

Coming Political Upheavals and a Warning Against Spiritism

In the section chapters 8:1-10:4 occurs another oracle which was spoken at some later time. As to what length of time there was between them no one can say. In chapter 8:1-4 is a prediction of the birth of Isaiah's second son, who is called Maher-shalal-hash-paz. Some have thought that Isaiah's second son was the one whose birth was foretold in verses 15 and 16 of the preceding chapter. This interpretation may be correct, but one cannot be dogmatic.

The next portion of this prophecy consists of verses 5-8. Again the prophet spoke of the Jews' being dissatisfied with their own condition and casting about, thinking that they could better their situation and improve conditions by winning the favor of Assyria. He therefore spoke of the Assyrian invasion, which came to pass under the rulership of Sennacherib. He compared the oncoming hosts to the flood waters of the river Euphrates and declared that they would overflow

Immanuel's land. The Assyrian records show that the hosts of that empire actually swept over the entire country, leaving it desolate.

In the paragraph consisting of verses 9-15 we have a prediction concerning a great political upheaval among the peoples of the earth, who band themselves together in a confederacy and conspiracy, and who are broken in pieces. The transition from the preceding prediction in verses 5-8 which, as we have just seen, was fulfilled in the Assyrian invasion, was easy since it naturally blends with the forecast of the invasion of Palestine by the hosts of the nations in the end-time. But the prophet urged his brethren not to become affrighted at this military and political situation. Instead of fearing men, they should fear Jehovah and sanctify Him. "And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble thereon, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken" (vss. 13-15). These verses constitute a prediction concerning the Messiah, who will be to those who accept and trust Him a sanctuary—a place of worship—but He, to those who do not accept Him, will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The prophet, in this prediction of the future, foretold that many of the Jews would stumble in regard to Him, fall, and be broken. This passage was literally fulfilled at our Lord's first coming, in the Jews' not accepting Him as Lord and Saviour, and in their rejection of Him as a nation.

Verses 16-18 form a single prophecy. In this paragraph Isaiah commanded his disciples to bind up and seal the testimony among themselves—the testimony concerning himself and his family, all of whom were typical of Messiah and His brethren in the spiritual sense of the term. That this interpretation is correct is seen from Hebrews 2:13, which quotes a portion of this passage and applies it to the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples. Isaiah's name and those of his children were significant and typical of spiritual realities, as an examination of them indicates.

At times demonism comes to the fore. This is especially true in times of national and international crises. This fact is set forth in the prediction found in verses 19-22. Isaiah foretold that, when the Assyrian forces would begin to invade the country, many would seek those who had familiar spirits and those who were fortunetellers in order to learn the outcome of the threatened danger. The people thought that they were getting in communication with their departed dead in order to learn facts that would be advantageous to the living. This is nothing but spiritism—demonism. This is something God hates. Moses and the prophets denounced every type of spiritism and fortune telling. The Apostle Paul forewarned that in the end-time spiritism will be prevalent. After the last war fortune telling and palmistry, together with astrology, thrived everywhere. People wanted to receive messages from their loved ones, who had been slain in the carnage of that conflict. There is little doubt but that this same situation will be duplicated at the conclusion of the present war.

People who consult spiritualists or fortunetellers never receive a message from their departed loved ones although they often do receive messages purported to be from them; but these communications come only from demons.

The Lord warned Israel in these words: "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them." We have the Word of God. In it He has given us all that He wants us to know and that is beneficial for us. Let us therefore avoid every appearance of dabbling in spiritism.

The Coming of the Prince of Peace

In chapter 9 the prophet passed over from the dark days of the Assyrian invasion to the time of the coming of Christ when He was here nineteen hundred years ago. In verse 1 he spoke of "the former time," when the land of Israel, which was overrun by the Assyrian hordes, was in darkness. But, in contrast with that time of distress, he spoke of the first coming of Christ and of His ministry in the northern portion of Palestine and declared that God would make that section of the country glorious. The way this was to be brought about was that to the people who had been walking in darkness a great light would shine forth—Christ the Light of the world! This prediction was literally fulfilled in the great Galilean ministry of our Lord, of which we read in the Synoptic Gospels.

From the prediction concerning Christ's ministry in Galilee (vs. 2) the prophet swept out into the future (vss. 3 ff.) and described the great increase and multiplication of the population of Israel and the unbounded joy of the nation in a time yet future—the great Millennial Age. The occasion of this outburst of joy on the part of Israel will be the fact that "the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, thou hast broken as in the day of Midian" (vs. 4). God in a most miraculous manner defeated the mighty hosts of the Midianites in the days of Gideon. This victory was such a signal one that it stood out in the minds of the people of Israel as a demonstration of divine intervention in behalf of His people. The prophet therefore spoke of the overthrow of the final enemies of Israel in the end-time and compared the victory to that one by Gideon over the Midianites.

According to verse 5 at this future time the Lord will destroy all the weapons of war. From that time onward there will be no munition factories grinding out weapons of destruction. On the contrary, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4).

The destruction of all Israel's foes and the introduction of this new era of righteousness will be the result of the birth of Immanuel, because the prophet exclaimed: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (vs. 6). This child is none other than that of the virgin concerning whom we studied in Isaiah 7:14.

This one is born unto the Jewish people—He sustains a relationship to the nation such as no other has ever done. Jesus came in fulfillment, as we have seen, of Isaiah 7:14, but He was not recognized by the nation as the God-man of whom this verse speaks. When, however, Israel as a nation accepts Him and pleads for Him to return—as the Scriptures have foretold that she will do—He will return and will be recognized by not only Israel, but the entire world as this Wonderful One, this Counsellor, this Mighty God, this Everlasting Father, this Prince of Peace!

When Israel receives her long-rejected Messiah and He returns, He will establish His rule and authority over His Chosen People. The Jews will then, as we learn from other passages, go forth into all the world, proclaiming the one everlasting gospel to the nations that survive the Tribulation, and convert them to Christ. As each nation receives the light and accepts Christ, it will apply to be incorporated into Messiah's kingdom. This turning to Christ by the nations of the world will continue until all will be brought under His benign and righteous reign. This growth and development of His kingdom is foretold in the following words: "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:7).

Jehovah's Judgments Against Israel

After giving this glorious vision of Messiah's future reign, Isaiah very abruptly ceased to look out into the distant future. After the threatened invasion of the country by Assyria had taken place and the country had been overrun and laid waste by the devastating hordes of the enemy—a stroke of judgment from the Almighty—the people, declared the prophet, did not take this calamity as a judgment from God but hardened their hearts and declared: "The bricks are fallen, but we will build with hewn stone; the sycamores are cut down, but we will put cedars in their place" (Isa. 9:10). Men and women can get so far from God and can plunge so far into sin that they do not recognize strokes of judgment upon them and can in the stoutness of evil hearts defy the Almighty, as did these people of whom the prophet spoke. According to Isaiah they were determined that, since their houses had been destroyed, they would build bigger, better, and finer ones—a spirit of defiance against God and His overruling providence. When they took this attitude, the Lord foretold that He would stir up their old enemies against them, even the Philistines and also the Syrians. In His bringing them against these

defiant Israelites, the Lord declared that His anger against their sin would not be appeased, but that His hand would still be held out against them in judgment. This prophecy, of course, has long since been fulfilled literally.

The prophet looked out into the future beyond the wars brought on by the Philistines and the Syrians and foretold that the stout hearts of the people would not be humbled by this further judgment and that the Lord would be forced by their attitude and actions to bring other strokes of judgment upon them. He would therefore, the prophet asserted, cut off their head and their tail, the palm branch and the rush in one day. By these figurative expressions he referred to the elder and the honorable man as the head and the prophet who taught lies as the tail. The people would be led into this condition of rebellion and apostasy by their careless, indifferent leaders who caused them to err. On account of this, destruction would come upon them. When the Lord would punish the people for their sin, sadness and sorrow would be brought into the various homes, as we see from verse 17; nevertheless He would not withdraw His wrath but would be compelled by their attitude and actions to continue His strokes of judgment.

In verses 18-21 Isaiah thought of the land of Israel as a great forest which was set afire by the wickedness of the people. In this bold, graphic figure he saw wickedness rolling upward in clouds of smoke as the land was completely consumed by the wrath of God. During this time of judgment he foresaw that one would "snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied." The distress of the country would reach the state wherein the living would feast upon the bodies of the dead. In verse 21 he foretold that there would be inter-tribal conflict, which struggles would be brought about because of Jehovah's anger against their sins.

In chapter 10:1-4 the prophet addressed the rulers of Israel saying, "Woe upon them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers that write perverseness; to turn aside the needy from justice, and to rob the poor of my people of their right that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey!" The rulers and leaders of a people are placed in positions of responsibility and authority. If they abuse the powers vested in them, God will hold them personally responsible for misconduct and the miscarriage of justice. The day of reckoning and of accounting will certainly come—to one and to all. The prophet therefore asked, "And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? To whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?" By these rhetorical questions the prophet simply was leading up to the definite prediction concerning the judgment that would fall upon these godless leaders, which he pronounced in the following words: "They shall only bow down under the prisoners, and shall fall under the slain." *God keeps the books.* He knows whom to punish and to what extent.

Isaiah concluded this section of his prophecy with the refrain which he had been using: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." The various strokes of judgment brought about by the Lord in the past have been necessitated by Israel's sins. Every sin and transgression receives a just recompense of reward in this life, and those that are not covered by the blood will be dealt with in the eternal world.

In our studies of the message of Isaiah the prophet we have come to the investigation of chapters 10:5-12:6.

This portion concludes what is properly known as the Book of Immanuel—consisting of chapters 7 to 12 inclusive. This section falls into two minor divisions: A prediction of the invasion of Palestine by the Assyrian, who in this case was Sennacherib, which description blends with a prophecy regarding an ultimate invasion of Palestine by him whom was typified by Sennacherib, namely, the Antichrist. At that future time the remnant of Israel will return to the Mighty God, the Messiah of Israel. This prediction is found in 10:5-27. The second portion of this prophecy consists of 10:28-12:6. Being guided by what is known by Bible students as "the law of recurrence," Isaiah covers the same period of time in this second section which he has portrayed in the preceding verses. He therefore, in one of the most graphic and dramatic passages of his writings sets forth the rapid march of the aggressor as he approaches Jerusalem and hurls defiance at her. Suddenly, by a stroke of divine judgment, the invading hosts like a mighty forest are hewn down. Following this prediction the

prophet foretells Messiah's coming to earth and His appearing as "a shoot out of the stock of Jesse." Quickly passing over the prediction regarding the first coming, he speaks of those events which we know will occur at the second coming of Messiah when He will judge the world, lift the curse, and introduce the great millennial reign of righteousness throughout the entire earth. The prophecy concludes with a song of thanksgiving and rejoicing that will be upon the lips of all who come to that time.

Having glanced at this section as a whole, we shall now notice the particulars of each subdivision and paragraph.

In a most dramatic manner the Prophet Isaiah, in an apostrophe, addressed the Assyrian, concerning whom he declared that this one was the rod of God's anger and the staff in whose hand was His indignation. The word rendered "Ho" in the sentence, "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation!" (10:5), also means "woe" and is thus rendered six times in chapter 5 as we have seen in a previous study. Grammatically the passage could be rendered, "Woe to Ashur," or "woe to the Assyrian ..." It is quite likely that both ideas are expressed in the word.

After addressing the Assyrian as the agent through whom God would execute His anger and indignation against Israel, the prophet declared, "I [Jehovah] will send him against a profane nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets" (vs. 6.) God has used and continues to employ nations in order to accomplish His plans and purposes. It is quite evident from this passage that the Assyrian is here but an instrument in the hands of the Almighty to punish His disobedient people Israel. In our first study of this series we saw from chapter 1 that the entire nation of Israel, with the exception of the faithful remnant, was thoroughly polluted with sin and iniquity. Notwithstanding this fact they continued to carry on a ceremonial worship, thinking that by so doing they could win the favor of the Almighty and at the same time continue in their immoral, corrupt manner of living. The Holy One of Israel cannot countenance sin, even in His beloved people. His holiness demands punishment. His love desires to pour out the fullness of His blessings upon them. So long therefore as they are continuing in sin, just that long is it impossible for Him to bless them. Israel was warned of God that her sin would find her out (Num. 32:23). Men should not be deceived, for God is not mocked; whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap (Gal. 6:7). God therefore had to punish Israel for her moral delinquencies and for her sins.

In this instance He used the Assyrian. When we look at profane history as well as at the biblical account, we realize that the specific fulfillment was the invasion of Palestine by the Assyrian nation under the leadership of Sennacherib. Later the Lord used Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, as His "battle-axe" in punishing Israel. (See Jeremiah, chapters 50, 51, for the prediction concerning Babylon. One should also examine Habakkuk, chapter 1, for supplemental information on this point.)

Although the Lord was using the Assyrians as well as the Babylonians, to accomplish His purpose, they were unconscious of the fact that they were thus carrying out the will of God in order to punish His ancient people. This fact is asserted in the following statement, "Howbeit he [the Assyrian] meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few" (vs. 7). Men make their plans and state their purposes. The same is true with reference to nations. The Lord allows them to act according to their own free will—within certain prescribed limits—and at the same time overrules and directs their efforts and makes them contribute to the advancement of His eternal plans and purposes. This is what is asserted in the verse just quoted.

From verses 8-11 of our chapter we see a manifestation of the proud, arrogant spirit of the king of Assyria. He boasted that the princes in his armies were kings. This statement may have been literally true; or it may be that he was thinking of his subordinate officials as equal to kings of other nations. From these verses we see that he had conquered Calno, Carchemis, Hamath, Arpad, Samaria, and Damascus. Being drunk with the ambition of conquest, he thought that by his own might he had conquered these various kingdoms and their gods. He thought of Jehovah, the God of the Israelites as

being nothing more than an idol of the nations. He therefore felt that he could conquer Jerusalem and its people. Obviously he was blinded by his great successes. Of course he could not see spiritual realities as they were; unregenerated men cannot discern spiritual matters. They can only be interpreted by the aid of the indwelling Spirit of God and in the light of His infallibly inspired Word, which thing this boastful monarch did not have.

Concerning this king the Lord declared, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks" (10:12). According to Psalm 33, verses 10, 11, the counsel of the nations shall be brought to nought, but "the counsel of Jehovah standeth fast for ever." As stated above, the Lord uses wicked, evil men and nations to forward His plans and purposes. When He has accomplished His work through such men or nations, He either, figuratively speaking, lays them aside or deals drastically with them, punishing them for their own sins and wrongdoing. In some cases nothing but the death sentence will satisfy divine justice. This was the case with Sennacherib as we learn (Isa. 37:36-38).

The reason the Lord had to deal drastically with Sennacherib and his lieutenants was that he, together with them, refused to acknowledge His supremacy. On the contrary, he boasted that his conquests were due to his own strength, might, and understanding. His insane ravings and boastful utterances concerning his self-sufficiency are set forth in verses 13 and 14. Because of this arrogant attitude, the Lord had to deal with him drastically as soon as he had accomplished His purposes through him. Had Sennacherib repented, as Nebuchadnezzar later did (Dan., chap. 4), it is altogether possible that he might have been spared such severe and final judgment.

As one carefully studies verses 13 and 14, one sees that this language goes far beyond the experiences of Sennacherib, even though the attitude expressed there was that maintained by this proud monarch. He did overrun the country of central and western Asia as he states; but he did not gather "all the earth." When I see this statement, I realize that the prophet was blending the prediction concerning the Assyrian of the immediate future with a prophecy concerning another one who will do throughout the world what Sennacherib did within his sphere of influence in western Asia. This method of blending two predictions regarding widely separated events is the principle known to Bible students as the "law of double reference." The prediction therefore had an immediate fulfillment in Sennacherib, as history shows; but it will find its complete and perfect realization in another one who will conquer all the earth in the end-time. The Prophet Isaiah, in foretelling the overthrow of the world power in the end-time, spoke of its ruler as "the Assyrian" (See Isa., chaps. 13, 14, especially 14:25). Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, likewise, in describing the end-time, spoke of this future ruler as "the Assyrian" (Micah 5:5,6). This usage of language is common to all peoples. We speak of the unknown in terms of the known. This is what is known as a "play on words." When Jesus was talking to the woman at the well in Samaria, He offered to give her "living water"—salvation. The context shows that He was speaking of regeneration and salvation; but, since they had been talking of literal water, He spoke of spiritual realities in terms of the topic of their conversation. In the same way, when the Assyrian was the world ruler of his day, Isaiah spoke of the world ruler of the end-time in terms of the monarch of his own time. That such scriptural usage was common is evidenced by a comparison of II Kings 23:29 with Jeremiah 46:2. When these two passages are studied in the light of their contexts, it is seen that both writers were talking of the same event and of the same person. In the former the king of Babylon is called "the king of Assyria"; whereas, in the latter passage he is correctly called "the king of Babylon." We see a similar usage in Ezra 6:22. In this passage the Persian king is spoken of in terms of the king of Assyria. When therefore Isaiah blended his description of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king with his prediction regarding the world ruler of the end-time, he naturally spoke of him as the Assyrian. His auditors understood what he meant.

When we study the characteristics of this world ruler of the end-time, we see that he is the same as the Antichrist of other predictions. We therefore shall not look for a separate individual in the future known as the Assyrian, since he is one and the same person as the world ruler of the end-time.

Since both Sennacherib of ancient Syria and the Antichrist of the end time magnify themselves against Jehovah, the God of Israel, the Lord showed how unreasonable such an attitude and course of conduct are (Isa. 10:15-19). It would be inconsistent for an ax to boast against the man who wields it; or for a saw, if it could talk, to boast itself against the one who operates it. In the same manner it is most inconsistent for any mortal man to boast and to suppose himself independent of God, in whom he lives, moves, and has his being.

In 10:17-19, the great Assyrian nation; together with its armed forces, is compared to a forest. The Lord therefore threatened to send leanness among His fat ones and to kindle a fire in this mighty forest. The fire which starts the conflagration is none other than "the light of Israel ... and his Holy One." The result of this judgment will be the wiping out of practically the entire nation—with only a remnant remaining (vs. 19).

In verses 20-30 we have a prediction that there will also be a remnant of Israel which will escape the judgment of that time—the great Tribulation as we learn from parallel passages—and which will return to God. At that time this faithful remnant will no longer lean upon any human government or group of nations for protection as Israel has done in the past. This remnant will see the mistake which their ancestors have made through the centuries and will return "unto the mighty God." Who is this Mighty God? The answer is found in a verse which we considered in our study last month, Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

The remnant of Israel will be taught the facts concerning this child born unto the Jewish nation who is none other than "the Wonderful One, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." This passage, studied in the light of related ones, is a messianic prediction which foretells the coming of the second person of the Holy Trinity to earth and His being born in the form of the Christ-child. When the time arrives here foretold by the prophet in chapter 10, Israel—the generation living at that time—will be convinced of the truthfulness of the message and will accept Him as Redeemer and Messiah.

The prophet looks into the future and sees the great increase of the Jewish people as at the present time. Hence he declares that, though the people of Israel shall be as the sands of the sea, only a remnant will return, the reason being that there is a destruction decreed upon even the Chosen People of God—a destruction which will overflow with righteousness. From the last paragraph of Zechariah, chapter 13, we learn that there will be two-thirds of the nation of Israel which will succumb to the mighty strokes of God's judgment during this Tribulation. Only a third of the nation therefore will survive. These will return to this Mighty God. The Lord has decreed a full end to be made concerning the present order of affairs. He is going to make a clean sweep of the present situation. In righteousness will He perform all His acts.

When we read Isaiah 10:24-27 in the light of parallel and related passages, we know that the Assyrian of the end-time, the Antichrist, will be backed by all the power of Satan, which he will use against Israel for her destruction. To the faithful remnant the Lord speaks the encouraging word: "Be not afraid of the Assyrian, though he smite thee with the rod, and lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt." The reason for the Lord's giving this encouraging message is that in a little while His indignation against the Antichrist shall be wrought and the destruction of this great enemy of Israel will be an accomplished fact. The Lord will at that time intervene with miraculous power and will bring one stroke of judgment after another upon the enemies of Israel as He did upon the Egyptians when He, at the hand of Moses, delivered the Hebrew people from Egyptian bondage. The mighty works that God will perform will be so very marvelous and wonderful that those which were wrought in her behalf when she left Egypt will appear as insignificant. As a consequence, throughout the Millennial Age people will no longer refer to the marvels which God wrought at the deliverance of Israel from Egypt but will speak of the mighty powers which He demonstrated when He delivered her from her age long sojourn among the nations. (See Jeremiah 23:7, 8.)

As suggested above, the prophet, in verses 28-32, described in a most graphic manner the approach of the Assyrian to Jerusalem. Like an on rushing flood he comes within sight of the city and hurls defiance at her. He can go only so far and no farther. The Lord sets the limit beyond which he cannot pass, just as He does with reference to the mighty, roaring billows: "though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it" (Jer. 5:22). The Lord knows how to deliver His people out of every danger.

When the Assyrian thus came against Jerusalem to subdue it, he was hindered by the power of God. The topmost boughs of his forest were lopped off, the high of stature were hewn down, and the mighty thicket of his forest was laid low. This prediction was fulfilled as we see in Isaiah, chapter 37, and parallel passages.

The world ruler in the end-time will bring his armies against Jerusalem to battle. He will be unable to conquer the city completely, for at a critical moment the Lord Jehovah will descend from heaven and His feet will stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives. He will stop the battle and inaugurate the period of peace. These future events will be the complete fulfillment of this prediction.

Isaiah, still comparing the nation of Assyria to a forest, continued this figure in chapter 11 and applied it to the Jewish nation. Of course the royal house is thought of as the largest and most imposing tree which likewise is hewn down, but its roots or stump is left in the ground. Out of this stock there springs up a branch which bears fruit. The name of this tree or stump is "the stock of Jesse," who was the father of David. In view of these facts we know therefore that the Davidic house was in the prophet's mind when he spoke this language. The royal house of David was hewn down at the time of Babylonian captivity, but those of the Davidic dynasty continued to live. Finally, in the first century of the Christian Era, the branch out of its roots came up in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, our Lord and the Hebrew Messiah.

According to Isaiah 11:2, the Spirit of God rests upon Him. Here the Spirit spoken of in terms of the seven things which He accomplishes through the Messiah. This sevenfold aspect of the work of the Spirit of God is echoed in Revelation, chapters 1 and 4, in the statement regarding "the seven spirits of God." An examination of the life of our Lord shows that He was under the complete domination and sway of the Holy Spirit from the time of conception till He offered Himself a sacrifice without blemish unto God by "the Eternal Spirit."

The block of scripture consisting of Isaiah 11:3-5 foretells Christ's judgment of the living nations when He returns to earth. This scene is set forth graphically in Matthew 25:31-46. When these two passages are studied carefully and compared, it will be seen that they are not speaking of a general judgment as we frequently hear mentioned. On the contrary these passages speak of the judgment of the living nations—those persons who survive the Tribulation and who are upon the earth when the Lord returns. In neither passage is there anything said about a resurrection, nor is there anything suggested concerning the necessity for the new birth. The basis of that judgment is the attitude and conduct of these toward our Lord's brethren according to the flesh—the Jews. He will separate these people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Some will be put on the right hand and others upon the left. Those upon the right hand will be placed there because of their kindly feeling toward Christ as manifested in their attitude and actions toward the least of His brethren during the time of their national sorrow and distress. From Psalm 24 we see that these people will receive a blessing from the Lord, even righteousness from the God of Jacob. They will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ when they see the facts regarding Him and receive Him. They will accept Him with their whole hearts at that time and thus be clothed with His righteousness. On the other hand, those placed upon the left side will be consigned to everlasting punishment because of their hatred toward our Lord, which feeling manifests itself in their refusal to be kind and gentle to His brethren, the Jews, during their national crisis throughout the Tribulation.

Since verses 1 and 2 of this chapter deal with the first coming of Messiah, as we have already seen, and since verses 3-5 foretell events connected with His second coming, we see that the entire Christian Dispensation is passed over

between verses 2 and 3. This is not a strange literary phenomenon in prophecy; for frequently the prophets spoke very definitely concerning our Lord's first coming and, without any intimation blended their descriptions with prophecies regarding His return and reign of righteousness.

There are four types of messianic prophecy which we must keep clearly in mind if we are to understand the prophetic word. The first of these focuses attention exclusively upon the first coming of the Messiah. The second one deals with things connected with His future return. The third type, like the one at which we are looking now, blends the descriptions of the two comings into a single picture; whereas the fourth type gives us a blueprint, as it were, of the entire redemptive career of King Messiah, consisting of the first coming, His rejection by the Jews, His ascension to the right hand of the throne of God, His session there during the present dispensation, and His return in glory and power at the end of this age to establish His reign of righteousness upon the earth. One must understand that these four classes of prophecy are to be found in the prophetic word. When we lay such a prophecy as the one under consideration beside those predictions which fall into the fourth class, we see that the Christian Dispensation is passed over between verses 2 and 3 of our passage.

The prophet Isaiah is chronological in unfolding his prophecy in chapter 11, for in verses 6-9 he foretells the time when the Lord will lift the curse from the animal creation. This event takes place after He returns to earth. When He does come back to earth, He will lift the curse that fell upon the animal kingdom at the time of man's disobedience. Originally the animals were gentle and peaceful. Not one of them would injure another one. But when man disobeyed God, the curse fell upon all creation and changed the peaceful nature of the beasts into that of enmity and of bloodthirstiness. When, however, the curse is lifted, the wolf and the lamb will lie down together. The leopard and the kid will likewise feed in the same pasture. Those reptiles that are now poisonous and vicious will not be dangerous at that time, for a little child "shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den" and yet not be injured in anywise. The lion will no longer eat flesh, but will eat straw like the ox. This prediction is confirmed by a like one in Hosea 2:18, Ezekiel 34:28, Romans 8:19-24.

The interpretation which I have placed upon these verses is the only logical one according to the Golden Rule of Interpretation, which tells us that we must "take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the context indicate clearly otherwise." When we realize that in Isaiah 11:3-5 the prophet was talking about the second coming of Christ and followed his prediction concerning this event by the one which tells us that the lamb and the leopard shall lie down together with the kid and the calf and that there will be no hostility in the animal kingdom, we see that the facts of the context indicate clearly that the prophet was talking about the time which follows our Lord's second advent. He was not therefore speaking of anything which occurs at the present time, but instead he was speaking of the time when the curse will be lifted from the earth and peace, happiness, and joy will be the order of the day.

In Isaiah 11:10 we have a brief prediction concerning Jerusalem as it will be in the great Millennial Age. I was at one time asked by a minister if I believed that Christ would return and reign in old, filthy, dirty, squalid Jerusalem. To this question I answered in the negative. Jerusalem will be purged and cleansed of all her wickedness and sin. She will be created the joy of the whole earth and the glory of God will dwell there. This is seen in such passages as Isaiah 2:1-4, 4:2-6, and Micah 4:1-8. We get another glimpse of Jerusalem, together with the whole earth, during that future period in such passages as Isaiah 65:17-25. At that time God will create the heavens anew and the earth anew. At the same time He will create Jerusalem a joy and her people, the Jews, a rejoicing. Jerusalem has passed through many crises in which the welfare and lives of her people were hanging in the balances. Great and unspeakable have been the sufferings of the people of Zion. But when God creates it anew and the joy of the whole earth, nevermore will there be any weeping or mourning in her; because the former things will have passed away and they will be hid from God's eyes. Isaiah 11:10 sums up all the promises which relate to the deliverance of Jerusalem as found in the verses referred to and many others that could be cited.

The final regathering of Israel is foretold in Isaiah 11:11-16. Here we are told that at this future time God will set His hand a second time to regather the remnant of His people that remain from the various nations. At that time He will reassemble the outcasts of Israel and will gather them from the four corners of the earth. As we study Isaiah 11:11-12 in the light of Ezekiel 37:1-14—the vision of the valley of dry bones—we see that this second regathering will be a gradual one. The dry bones begin to come together, each taking its place in relation to others so as to form a skeleton. Then sinews joining these bones appear. Then appears the flesh upon the bones and finally skin covers the flesh. At last the Spirit of God breathes life into these corpses and they arise a mighty army as set forth in Ezekiel, chapter 37. This symbolical representation sets forth the gradual regathering of Israel to her own land. This return to the land of the fathers develops in the conversion of the remnant of Israel to the Lord Jesus Christ, as indicated by the Spirit's breathing life into the dead bodies.

At that time the envy and the jealousy that existed between the various tribes and sections of Jewry will be a thing of the past. In the great Tribulation the faithful remnant will be supernaturally endowed with strength, and those constituting this group will go against their enemies—against the Philistines on the west and the children of Edom, Moab, and Ammon on the east. This supernatural assistance is promised to the faithful remnant in various places and will be granted to them during the hour of their trial in the Tribulation.

At that time the Lord will supernaturally open up a way for Israel to return from Egypt and from Assyria. He opened up the way for her return to the Land from Egyptian bondage under Moses. He gives a like promise to the Israelites of the future who remain faithful and true to Him.

The prediction closes with a song of praise to God for the deliverance which He will yet accomplish for His beloved people Israel. They will therefore shout and sing, expressing themselves in the following hymn of thanksgiving:

"I will give thanks unto thee, O Jehovah; for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. 2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid: for Jehovah, *even* Jehovah, is my strength and song; and he is become my salvation. 3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. 4 And in that day shall ye say, Give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name, declare his doings among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted. 5 Sing unto Jehovah; for he hath done excellent things: let this be known in all the earth. 6 Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion; for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 12:1-6)."

THE ORACLES REGARDING THE NATIONS (Chapters 13:1-23:18)

I. BABYLON

Chapters 13,14

In our exposition of the Book of Isaiah we now come to the study of the prophecy regarding Babylon found in chapters 13 and 14. Babylon was founded by Nimrod who became a mighty hunter in the earth. From Genesis 10:10 we see that the beginning of his kingdom was the union of Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh. After he had established his kingdom in the land of Shinar, he went northward into the country later known as Assyria and there builded Ninevah and other cities of antiquity. His kingdom of Babel became the dominating factor in the early centuries of the human race after the Flood. From Genesis 11:1-9 we see that an attempt was made to build up a civilization that would be independent of God. It seems to have been the hope of the promoters of this project to establish a government and to build a city which would defy the wrecks of time and the judgments of the Almighty. The Lord knows how to deal with every situation. In this case He confounded the language of the people, drove them from their project, and dispersed them throughout the world. Thus the first effort at independence of God, attempted by man, was frustrated by the judgment of Almighty God.

We are told that history runs in cycles or repeats itself. Careful students of history have come to this conclusion. The facts seem to justify this deduction. If this principle is true, we may logically expect in the end of the age for civilization to return to its original source and there develop into another effort at independence of God and defiance of His holy authority. Such an hypothesis as we shall see in this study, is justified by a study of the prophecies relative to Babylon.

Babylon has played an important part in the history of the past and is destined likewise to play the leading role in the end-time. There is therefore no wonder that different prophets spoke regarding it. The three principal prophecies relating to it are, however, to be found in Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14; Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51; and Revelation, chapters 17 and 18. In this connection let me emphasize the fact that we are to understand by the term, Babylon, the literal city in the Plains of Shinar which was established by Nimrod and over which Nebuchadnezzar finally reigned. We are to understand this name as referring to the literal city whenever it occurs unless there are clear indications in the context which show conclusively that we are not to take the term literally but are to understand it as being used symbolically or figuratively.

As an illustration of this truth may I call attention to Revelation, chapters 17 and 18? It is clear from the facts presented in chapter 17 that, though the term, Babylon, is used, it is quite evident that the literal city was not meant. The facts demand that we understand it as referring to an ecclesiasticism. On the other hand, when we examine the facts that are presented in Revelation, chapter 18, we see most clearly that a literal, actual city is described. If we observe the Golden Rule of Interpretation which insists that we take everything literally unless the facts of the given context indicate clearly otherwise, we shall see that, in those passages where Babylon is mentioned, the facts always indicate the literal city. Those prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to the destruction of Babylon are to be understood as indicating the actual, literal city of that name.

When we investigate Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14, we see that the prophet was speaking of "the day of Jehovah" which is the Tribulation—the last week of Daniel's prophecy, chapter 9—a period of seven years during which God will be pouring out His wrath upon the world because of its sin. That Isaiah was speaking of the Tribulation in these chapters is evident when we note in 13:10 that there will be great signs and wonders in the heavenly bodies and terrific judgments upon the earth. When this time arrives, God will purge the world of all wickedness and there will be very few men left. When we study this prophecy in the light of others, we see that this is what God does during the Tribulation. Moreover, additional

proof that Isaiah saw the destruction of Babylon in the Tribulation is evident from the predictions that, at the time foreseen in the prophecy, Israel will be delivered once and for all (Isa. 14:1,2).

From the unanimous testimony of the prophets we know that Israel will never be delivered until the end of the Tribulation. From the facts just stated we conclude that Isaiah was speaking of the overthrow of Babylon in the end-time.

This passage assumes, therefore, that Babylon will be standing at the end of this age. From history we know that it was still standing in the first century, even though its glory had long since passed and it had sunk almost into oblivion as far as being a great metropolitan center was concerned. It seems quite possible that Peter was in Babylon when he wrote his first epistle (I Pet. 5:13). Just when it actually ceased as a city, history does not inform us. The modern town of Hillah is located on one corner of the site upon which Babylon formerly stood. Since Babylon is to be destroyed in the end-time and since it is not in existence at the present, it must arise from the dust of the past and assume the importance that is set forth in these predictions. When one carefully investigates Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51, one will see that the destruction foretold there was never accomplished. Its overthrow, according to the prophet, was to be very sudden. Israel at the time is to be delivered and to enter into an everlasting covenant with God. She has never thus entered into such a covenant. From these and many other predictions of the prophets we know that this prophecy has never been fulfilled, but it awaits the future for its realization. From this fact also we know that Babylon must arise out of its grave of the past and become a dominant factor in the world at the end of this age.

The oracle, contained in chapters 13 and 14 of Isaiah, begins with a graphic description of the armies of the kingdoms of the world which gather against Babylon to besiege it. The prophet in a very vivid manner (vs. 2) urges that an ensign be borne upon the bare heights, that the voice be lifted up calling upon the armies of the world to hasten, and that the signal beckoning them to march forward be waved, as they come from all quarters of the globe to besiege Babylon.

Those who constitute this army are said to be the Lord's "consecrated ones" whom He has called for that very purpose, namely, to execute His anger against Babylon. They are *consecrated* in that they are to be used by the Lord in bringing His punishment upon this proud, dominating city of the future. This army will consist of vast hordes from all the nations. Jehovah speaks of them as His host which He musters for the battle. They come from far countries, even from the "uttermost part of heaven," and they are "the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land" (vs. 5).

That which might properly be called the "Battle of Babylon" in the end of the Tribulation is but a part of the "war of the great day of God, the Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). We might designate this as the eastern battlefront where the war will be waged at the same time that great hosts of soldiers and equipment will be gathered on the western battlefront, which will be in Palestine and adjacent lands. Joel saw the western battlefront and spoke of the "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14). Zechariah likewise foretold the siege of Jerusalem in the end of the Tribulation (Zech. 14). John in the latter part of Revelation, chapter 19, likewise foretold the war on the western front in that future "great day of God the Almighty."

When we have studied the entire oracle, we shall conclude that this siege of Babylon foretold by the prophet occurs at the very end of the Tribulation. We know by an examination of those predictions which foretell the fighting that will take place in Palestine that this will likewise occur at the very end of the Tribulation. In view of these facts we conclude that there will be these two spheres of action where the war of the great day of God the Almighty will be waged. When we consider all the facts, it seems quite likely that that part of the conflict which will be waged in Babylon will be over first and that the conflict in Palestine will be the very last of that war.

The distress that will come upon men at that time is compared to childbirth: "Therefore shall all hands be feeble, and every heart of man shall melt: and they shall be dismayed; pangs and sorrows shall take hold *of them*; they shall be in pain as a woman in travail: they shall look in amazement one at another; their faces *shall be* faces of flame" (13:7,8). In chapter

66:7-9 the prophet also compared the distress of the Tribulation to pangs of childbirth. Jeremiah used the same figure. So did Hosea and other prophets. As the Tribulation advances, the birth pangs of that new era which it will introduce will become more intense and cause greater suffering.

At the time foreseen by the prophet there will be great signs in the heavens and upon the earth. "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine" (vs. 10). These miraculous signs in the heavens above are foretold as transpiring before the Tribulation (Joel 2:28-32). From Revelation 6:12-17 we see that similar signs and wonders are prophesied as taking place in the heavens above and upon the earth. Also at the end of the Tribulation these signs will occur, according to the prediction of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 24:29-31). The darkening of the heavenly bodies mentioned in Isaiah 13:10 is that which was foretold by the Lord Jesus as occurring at the end of the Tribulation: "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." (Matt. 24:29).

The judgments of the Tribulation will purge the world of all sinners. This fact is set forth in the following passage: "And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity: and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more rare than fine gold, even a man than the pure gold of Ophir" (vss. 11, 12). This day of Jehovah will be one of destruction and will come from the Almighty. It will be a day cruel with wrath and fierce anger, to make the world desolate and to destroy all the sinners out of it. This same prediction is found in Isaiah 24:6: "Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." God permits sin for a certain length of time and up to a given point. When men reach that point, His holiness cannot do otherwise than cause Him to hurl his judgments of extermination upon the sinner.

During the Tribulation the Almighty will make the heavens to tremble and the earth to shake out of its place (vs. 13). A prediction similar to this one is found in Isaiah, chapter 24, where we are told that, "The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently. The earth shall stagger like a drunken man, and shall sway to and fro like a hammock; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall, and not rise again" (Isa. 24:19,20). This prediction becomes intelligible to one who realizes that during the time of the Tribulation certain of the heavenly bodies will be dissolved as we read in Isaiah 34:1-4. Science has demonstrated beyond a peradventure that the attraction of gravitation is the power that holds the various heavenly bodies in their proper orbits. This earth, like all other material bodies throughout the universe, is held in space by the power of gravitation. When certain of these physical bodies are dissolved, the anchor ropes by which this earth is held, figuratively speaking, will be destroyed; the earth therefore will sway to and fro like a hammock and stagger like a drunken man.

Isaiah saw the outcome of the Battle of Babylon. It might be more accurate, however, for us to speak of this as the siege of Babylon by the armies of the world. When these great changes and convulsions shall have taken place throughout the world of nature, those armies will be affected. "And it shall come to pass, that as the chased roe, and as sheep that no man gathereth, they shall turn every man to his own people, and shall flee every man to his own land. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is taken shall fall by the sword" (vss. 14, 15).

In this great struggle the infants of the city "shall be dashed in pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be rifled, and their wives ravished" (vs. 16). All the cruelties of barbaric warfare will be in evidence at that time. What is being enacted in those countries that are now torn by war will be re-enacted in this future day of Jehovah's wrath.

In 13:1-16, as we have already seen, the prophet was undoubtedly foretelling the terrific conflict that will take place at Babylon during the time of the great Tribulation Period—especially the latter part of it. But in verses 17 and 18 it is

quite evident that Isaiah was speaking of the over-throw of Babylon which was accomplished by the Medes, for they are especially mentioned in these verses. They were a cruel, heartless, barbarous people, who waged a bloody war against Babylon, as is indicated by these verses.

After foretelling the immediate doom that would come upon Babylon, the prophet again looked out into the future and pictured the desolate condition of the place occupied by Babylon as it will continue throughout the great Millennial Age. This forecast of its waste and ravaged condition is set forth in Isaiah 13:19-22. According to verse 19 Babylon is to become like Sodom and Gomorrah after they were overthrown. So very complete was the destruction of these wicked cities that their very site is a question of great debate today. Thus the overthrow of Babylon will be complete and never after that shall it be inhabited, "neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation." We are told specifically that, "neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there." On the contrary, "wild beasts of the desert, shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and wild goats shall dance there." Wolves and jackals also shall continue to live there.

It has been supposed by some scholars that this prediction has already been fulfilled, but this interpretation is a mistake because, as has been stated above, the present city of Hillah, a city of ten thousand inhabitants, is located on the ancient site of old Babylon. But when this passage is fulfilled, never will any mortal reside there again. Babylon, like Edom, will be a desolation and a waste, even throughout the Millennial Age. (See Isaiah, chapter 34, for the prediction concerning the perpetual waste of Edom.) These lonely, desolate localities will be a silent testimony to the ravages of sin and God's hatred against all rebellion and unrighteousness.

In Isaiah 14:1,2 we have a prediction of the final restoration of Israel to favor with God and her rehabilitation in the land of her fathers. In this passage we are reminded of the fact that God has chosen Jacob and will yet have compassion upon Israel. God chose Abraham and his seed to be the channel of world blessing. The Lord has never repudiated that choice, neither has He cast off His people. It is true that on account of disobedience they are in rejection temporarily, but the time will come when Israel will come back into favor with her God. This is shown very clearly in Romans, chapter 11. She was cut off because of unbelief. By her faith she will be grafted in again and will be brought into fellowship with God. The Old Testament prophets spoke of this final restoration of Israel to favor with her God. When she thus returns and is converted, she will become the head of the nations and will be placed in her own land. Then those who have persecuted her shall become her servants while she will be the ministers and priests of our God (cf. Isa. 61:4-6).

The paragraph consisting of 14:3-11 gives us the funeral dirge that Israel, delivered and restored to favor with God, will sing concerning the overthrow of the king of Babylon who is none other than the one whom we call the Antichrist in the New Testament. My reason for saying that this one is the Antichrist is that he is said to have "made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and overthrew the cities thereof; that let not loose his prisoners to their home" (vss. 16,17). From the context we know that this is a prediction of the overthrow of Babylon in the end-time. Moreover, this ruler of Babylon is the world ruler in the end-time. From the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 7, we know that the "little horn" which comes up after the ten and puts down three of these (kings) is the world dictator of the end-time. Since there can be but one world dictator at a given time, and since the one mentioned in Isaiah, chapter 14, is the world dictator of the end-time and likewise the one described in Daniel, chapter 7, verses 23-28, is the world dictator in the end-time, we conclude that the two prophets were talking of the same individual—the Antichrist.

In this paragraph we see this last king of Babylon—after the overthrow of the golden city—going down into Sheol. Israel, rejoicing over her deliverance from the oppressor, sings this funeral dirge, declaring that the great deliverance has come and that the world is freed from the oppression and depredations of this mighty and cruel monarch.

Sheol is seen especially in verses 9 to 11, inclusive. It is a place in the heart of the earth. It had two departments, separated by an impassible, gulf (Luke 16:19-31). Prior to the death, resurrection, and conquest of Christ all who died went to Sheol. The wicked went to the place to which the rich man described in Luke, chapter 16, went; whereas the righteous went to that apartment which was called "Abraham's bosom." There was no such thing as passing from one division to the other. Since the death and conquest of Christ, however, the righteous no longer upon death go to Hades. On the contrary, their spirits depart and are with Christ in heaven, which is, as the Apostle Paul stated, "very far better" than remaining here upon the earth. For the Christian, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (II Cor. 5:6-9). Those who have been and who now are in Sheol—the wicked—are here represented as being conscious and of recognizing this future world dictator as the one who treads the earth down under his ruthless despotism.

Another view of Sheol is to be found in Ezekiel 31:15-17 and 32:17-32. In Isaiah 14:3-20 it is seen that the Antichrist is slain and his spirit descends to Sheol. From II Thessalonians 2:8 we learn that the Antichrist is slain by the brightness of the coming of the Lord, but in Revelation 19:19-21 we see that the Antichrist is taken, together, with those who are his lieutenants. Then he and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire. Is there any contradiction between these predictions? No, of course not. The Antichrist is slain by the personal appearance of the Lord. His spirit descends to Hades. After this he is raised to life again and with the false prophet is cast alive into the Gehenna of fire where they continue throughout the thousand years of our Lord's reign upon earth (Rev. 20:1-10). In this lake of fire they remain forever and ever, together with Satan and all the lost.

In Isaiah 14:12-14 the prophet is speaking of the original rebellion of Satan, who was "the anointed cherub that covereth," the first of all of God's creatures and who was created holy and righteous altogether (Ezek., chap. 28). Not only did he walk "up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" which support the firmament upon which God's throne rests, but he was also made the god of this world and was in "Eden, the garden of God" during prehistoric times—the long ages of time which preceded the creation of Adam and the making of the later Garden of Eden in which Adam and Eve were placed. This anointed cherub exercised sway and authority over the earth, but finally, having caused everything to gravitate in his own direction, he became proud, conceited, and arrogant. He started a "whispering campaign" against the Almighty, which resulted in the revolt of one-third of the angels of God against the Almighty. Satan, the anointed cherub, feeling that he was in a position to match swords with the Almighty, declared, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." This rebellion was the occasion of his downfall—of his being cast out of heaven and becoming the great adversary of God and man.

Additional information on Satan's rebellion may be found in Ezekiel 28:11-19. (For a full discussion of this most important subject see the chapter, "Satan, the Kingdom of Darkness, and Sin," in my latest volume entitled *What Men Must Believe*.)

Why did Isaiah, in this passage, mention the original revolt of Satan in connection with the final world dictator of the end-time? The answer is to be found in the fact that this last world emperor, the Antichrist, is but a cat's-paw for Satan himself. Isaiah was simply following the regular prophetic method of blending a description of Satan in his original revolt with that of some earthly monarch whom he inspires to acts of rebellion and aggression. As an illustration of this principle let us turn to Ezekiel, chapter 28. In the first ten verses the prophet was addressing the king of Tyre, but in verses 11-19 it is quite evident that he was speaking of Satan and his original rebellion against God. The reason for this interpretation is that the description in these last verses goes far beyond the experience of any mortal man and can be interpreted as referring to none other than the original creature who revolted against the Almighty. Since this adversary of God and man constantly sponsors and moves kings to rebellion against God and assumes dictatorial powers, it was natural for the prophet to blend a description of him with that of some earthly monarch whom he inspires.

In Isaiah 14:15-20 we see that this final world ruler is slain but is denied decent burial—at least at first. The kings who are slain at the same time are given burial. On the contrary, his body lies exposed to the sun. As to how long it will be there, Isaiah does not tell us; but, as has been suggested above, it is quite likely that—after his having been slain—his spirit will reunite with his body, and he will be cast in the lake of fire where he will spend all eternity.

In verses 21-23 the prophet declared that the children of the Antichrist are to be slain in order that they might not repopulate the earth with their progeny. When God does send His judgments in fulfillment of this prediction upon Babylon, the city will be reduced to a desolation in which condition it will remain and all of the progeny of the wicked rulers will be slain.

According to verse 24 as the Lord has purposed so will He do. He will break the power of this world ruler, who in this passage is spoken of as the Assyrian since the king of Assyria was the world ruler of that day. At that time the yoke which has been upon the shoulder of Israel will be broken once and for all. A guarantee of this deliverance is that God has purposed to do this and no one can hinder His carrying out His intentions.

In verses 28-31, we find a prediction concerning the land of the Philistines, who were urged not to rejoice because the rod which had smitten them had been broken. Evidently the rod which Isaiah mentioned was the Assyrian of whom he spoke in chapter 10—Sennacherib. For he declared that there would come out of the serpent's root an adder, and his fruit should be a fiery flying serpent. This language speaks of some future ruler of the end-time as an adder and as a fiery flying serpent, who will wreak his vengeance upon the various cities of the country of Philistia. Probably a reference to this is seen in the latter part of Daniel, chapter 11, where we read of the Antichrist entering Palestine and of the invasion of that country by the kings of the north and of the south. According to Isaiah's prophecy there is very little hope held out for the remnant of the Philistines who, like their progenitors, are of an evil stock.

In the final verse of Isaiah, chapter 14, the prophet asks: "What then shall one answer the messengers of the nation?" The nation is represented as having messengers who have come to inquire about the future, as it pertained especially to the Jews. The answer which God gives is this: "That Jehovah hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge." The outcome of the entire situation in the end-time will be the complete deliverance of the remnant of the Jews who will constitute the new Israel, and through whom God will send forth His blessings to all nations in fulfillment of His promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).

THE ORACLES REGARDING THE NATIONS

(Chapters 13:1-23:18)

II. MOAB AND DAMASCUS

Chapters 15, 16, 17

In the present installment of this series we are to study the prophecies regarding Moab and Damascus. The prediction concerning the former is found in Isaiah, chapters 15 and 16, and that pertaining to the latter appears as chapter 17.

Oracle Regarding Moab

Moab, the progenitor of the nation of the Moabites, was the first-born son of Lot by one of his daughters (Gen. 19:30-38). There can be little wonder that the descendants of such a union would be of a low type of character. Someone has said that the proper time to begin to rear a boy is to start with his great-great-grandparents. Much practical and spiritual philosophy is wrapped up in such a statement. This principle is observable on every hand. It is a wonderful thing to be well-born, but it is a far greater thing to be born again. Unfortunately the Moabites were poorly born. There is little wonder then that these people were of the character which we see portrayed on the pages of Sacred Writ.

The nations of the world appear in the Scriptures only as they come in touch with the Chosen People. We therefore see them as Israel approaches her land on her way to Canaan. Her passage through the land of Moab is recorded in Numbers, chapters 21-25. The next time she came in contact with Moab was in the days of Saul, as is recorded in I Samuel 14:47. Once more, in the days of David, the paths of the two nations crossed, as we see in II Samuel 8:2. After the division of the kingdom—probably in the days of Omri, king of Israel—the northern kingdom conquered Moab and laid a very heavy yearly tribute upon that nation (II Kings 1:1, 3:4ff.). During the days of Omri and of Ahab, his son and successor, Moab paid tribute to Israel. But in the days of Jehoram of Israel, Moab revolted and threw off the yoke of bondage. The Moabite account of this revolt is recorded on the famous Moabite stone which was found at Dibon in 1868. About this time, the Moabites, together with the children of Ammon and the Edomites, invaded the southern boundaries of Judah, but suffered an overwhelming defeat by the miraculous intervention of the Lord at En-gedi (II Chron., chap. 20). A little later, in the time of Jehu, ruler of the northern kingdom, the Syrians invaded the territory of Trans-Jordan as far as Arnon and took possession of the land (II Kings 10:32,33). These people who had been subjected by the northern kingdom again wreaked their vengeance against the weakened kingdom of Israel. But in the days of Jeroboam II, according to the prophecy of Jonah (II Kings 14:25), they reconquered the territory east of the Jordan from the entrance of Hamath to the Dead Sea. Around 754 B.C. (according to the Ussher chronology) Tiglathpileser III of Assyria overran and devastated the country east of the Jordan, possibly as far south as the river Arnon. After this invasion it is quite possible that the Moabites again took possession of their ancient territory and extended their borders beyond that of the Arnon which constituted their northern boundary. Such are the bare facts as they appear in the historical records concerning Moab and her relation to Israel.

Now let us look at an ancient prophecy regarding Moab. In Isaiah, chapters 15 and 16; Jeremiah, chapter 48; and Ezekiel, chapters 20-35, we find predictions regarding this unhappy people.

Let us now look more carefully at the prophecy of Isaiah. The oracle begins with these words: "The burden of Moab." If one will read the fifteenth chapter of Isaiah, one will receive a clear, vivid, graphic picture of the desolations that were foretold would come upon Moab. Isaiah, the statesman-prophet, wept most bitterly concerning the Moabites and their sufferings which he foresaw and which we now know have already come to pass. He begins his vision by stating that Ar of

Moab and Kir of Moab would be laid waste in one night and brought to desolation. These are two of the outstanding ancient cities of the country. The former is in the north-central part of the country south of the Arnon River. Kir is still farther south, about the middle of the country. This latter city was one of the most powerful fortresses in all the Near East. I have had the privilege of staying in this city and preaching the gospel there.

According to verse 2 of this prophecy Isaiah saw the fleeing, horror-stricken refugees going up to the heathen temple to supplicate their god to intervene in the crisis which had come upon the nation. The word, Bayith, most likely refers to the most important shrine of Chemosh, the god of Moab. The prophet sees these fleeing refugees going to Dibon and to other high places to weep. Terror has paralyzed the country. They are gathered on the heights of Nebo to worship Chemosh, their God. They are at Medeba also. Baldness is seen on everyone's head and the beard is cut off. From verse 3 we see that the people in their great distress gird themselves with sackcloth and are in the streets. On the housetops and in the broad places he sees everyone in deep mourning. Moreover, at Heshbon and at Elealeh there is great wailing which can be heard as far as Jahaz, another important city of the northeastern section of the country. The men in the armed forces are crying aloud and are hysterical. Their souls within them are gripped with fear.

The invasion, with all the horrors of war, sweeps onward through the entire country. So appalling is the distress that the prophet declares, "My heart crieth out for Moab." The nobility of the land has fled to Zoar and to Eglath-shelishiyah. They go up the ascent of Luhith. This reference possibly indicates a sanctuary to which the people resort. At Horonaim they are crying out because of destruction. Moreover, at the waters of Nimrim there is desolation. The fugitives have fled northward to this place but there is nothing except desolation and destruction everywhere. The cry of distress goes roundabout and throughout all the borders of Moab. Not only does the prophet see this desolation which was to come upon Moab in the immediate future but in the last verse of this chapter he describes another judgment which he compares to the actions of a lion which stealthily comes upon its prey. Since the lion cannot be a literal one, it is quite likely that it has a symbolic significance and refers to some power that would make war against and invade the country. Since the word lion is used, some commentators have interpreted this symbol as referring to the country of Judah which would later make war against Moab. On this point, however, I cannot be dogmatic.

In Isaiah, chapter 16, verses 1 and 2, we find the prophet giving instructions to Moab in her great distress to send her tribute of lambs to the ruler of Zion. As we have seen above, the Moabites had to pay a heavy tribute to the kings of the northern kingdom until Mesha, king of Moab, revolted. In the latter years of the existence of the northern kingdom, the government was rather weak—especially after the days of Jeroboam II. Isaiah therefore calls upon the Moabites for them to send lambs to Jerusalem. This invitation was simply an exhortation for the Moabites to come and worship the true and the living God who was dwelling in His Temple at Mount Zion and who could be approached by any who would come in humility and faith.

Still speaking to the frightened refugees, whom he is inviting to worship God, the prophet compares them to wandering birds which have been scattered out of their nests and which are at the fords of the Arnon. In verse 3 the point of view is changed. Here the messengers from Moab are represented as being in Jerusalem and as asking the leaders of Israel to give counsel, to execute justice, and to make their shade as the night in the midst of the noonday. They ask the Jerusalem authorities to hide their outcasts, to betray not the fugitives. In other words, they are asking the leaders of Israel to take them under their wing and to protect them in this national crisis. Moreover, they plead that their outcasts and fugitives might dwell with Judah. They also request Israel to be a covert—a protective covering—to Moab. The reason for their imploring aid from Judah is that this kingdom has weathered the gale of a foreign invasion and has survived the ordeal, the destroyer and extortioner having ceased from her borders. Judah, therefore, according to the way of thinking of the Moabites, is in a position to give protection and assistance to Moab in this, her hour of distress.

The vision of the Moabites appealing to the Davidic house at Jerusalem for assistance in a crisis was suggestive to the prophet of the time in the future when the nations of earth will make their appeal to the Messiah in Mount Zion for His blessing and protection. Thus in verse 5 of chapter 16, Isaiah foretold the reign of King Messiah: "And a throne shall be established in lovingkindness; and one shall sit thereon in truth, in the tent of David, judging, and seeking-justice, and swift to do righteousness." As we have already seen in our study of chapter 9, King Messiah will return to this earth and establish His reign in Judah when the people of Israel confess their national sin of rejecting Him. He will then mount the throne of David and re-establish it. This, of course, will be the beginning of the millennial reign of our Lord. Converted Israel at that time will go into all the world and proclaim the truth to every mortal who survives the Tribulation and who enters the millennial kingdom. These nations will accept the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation. Then each converted nation will apply to King Messiah to be annexed or united to the kingdom of Israel as is suggested in these most striking words: "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:7).

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. The national characteristic of the Moabites was that of pride. It was my happy privilege to go throughout the length and breadth of the land of Moab and Edom in 1937. I had an opportunity of coming in touch with the people of the land, preaching in many of the villages—through an interpreter. The testimony of those who were acquainted with the peoples of Moab and Edom was that they are the proudest people on earth. This characteristic was evidently dominant in the days of Isaiah, for in verses 6 and 7 of this chapter the prophet denounced their pride and arrogancy and forewarned that God would bring judgment upon the people because of this.

In the northern section of the country, running from the present Amman of Trans-Jordan down to Heshbon and Jazer over to the sea, is a fine grape country. The raisins from eS Salt are at the present time famous. The vine of Sibmah was famous in Isaiah's day. In his mentioning the judgments that would come upon Moab, he spoke of the luxuriant and fruitful vineyard in this section of the country and told about the weeping that would result from the destruction of this great source of revenue. This prediction is found especially in verses 8-10. The prophet sees that all gladness and joy ceases or perishes from the land. His heart therefore is saddened because of the desolation that he saw would be wrought.

According to verse 12 of this chapter the people of Moab would go to their high places and worship, imploring their God, Chemosh, to intervene for them and to save their land. Throughout the Old Testament we read of the high places at which people worshiped. When I was in Petra in 1937, I climbed to the height of the high place of that city. It was about one thousand feet in elevation. Climbing the jagged rocks was a most difficult feat. When we reached the top we saw the well-preserved place where the gods were worshiped. The altar was well preserved and so were the places of ablution. Thus Isaiah saw the people of Moab going to these high places and worshipping, imploring divine intervention. But, he declared, their prayers and petitions would avail them nothing. The gods of the nations are but stocks and stones, whereas our God is a living God and is a very present help in time of need. Oh, that we could learn this lesson today!

In verse 13 of chapter 16 we find the following words of Isaiah: "This is the word that Jehovah spake concerning Moab in time past." This statement doubtless refers to the oracle which we have been studying and which is found in Isaiah 15:1-16:12. In 16:14, however, there appears this oracle: "But now Jehovah hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of a hireling, the glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt, with all his great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and of no account." The oracle which we have been studying was rather indefinite so far as the time for the desolation foretold was concerned. In the new oracle spoken by Isaiah the time limit is given very definitely—"Within three years, as the years of a hireling, the glory of Moab shall be brought into contempt, with all his great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and of no account." The judgment described in the long oracle may have been uttered by some prophet in the years before Isaiah's day, or it may have been uttered at the beginning of his ministry.

But in this closing verse the prophet was very specific and indicated that the whole prediction concerning the devastation of Moab would be accomplished in exactly three years.

I have gone, as I stated above, throughout the length and breadth of the country. It is indeed a Godforsaken, barren land. It is true that wheat and grain are grown in that section; but, whenever the moisture is insufficient, there is a crop failure, and great distress comes upon the people. In the eS Salt region grape-growing is the principal means of livelihood. It is true, also, that there are some olives, together with other fruits and vegetables; but, in the main, Moab lies in this desolate condition which was foretold by the prophet. One should study carefully Jeremiah, chapter 48, in connection with his examination of Isaiah's prediction concerning Moab in order to have a clear, graphic picture of the prophecy.

The Burden of Damascus

In chapter 17 of Isaiah's prophecy we read of the burden which the prophet uttered concerning Damascus of Syria. Damascus is the oldest city in the world today. Reference is made to it in Genesis 15:2. It is indeed a quaint and interesting city. I have visited it on two occasions and have been intrigued by its quaintness and by the primitive methods employed in the manufacture of goods today. The same methods which were used in ancient times are still employed today. Nevertheless most excellent articles are manufactured there.

In vision the prophet saw a time when Damascus would no longer be a city but would be reduced to a heap of ruins. At the time foreseen, he likewise observed that the cities of Aroer would likewise be forsaken. There are two cities by the name of Aroer in Trans-Jordan: one in the territory which anciently belonged to Reuben and the other northward in the territory occupied by Gad. It is quite likely that these two cities are referred to in this oracle (Isa. 17:2). The destruction of these two most important cities, together with Damascus, is shown by the fact that the prophecy foretold that flocks of sheep would lie down among the ruins, showing that all life, practically speaking, would become extinct.

Suddenly, in verse 3, the prophet shifted his point of view to that of the northern kingdom of Israel. Here he prophesied that the fortress of Ephraim—probably the city of Samaria, the capital—would cease, that the kingdom would likewise be reduced, and that there would be only a remnant in Syria. The glory of both the kingdom of Ephraim and that of Syria would pass away. But why are these two countries spoken of in connection with each other? The answer is probably to be found in the fact that those kingdoms became united in a confederacy against the kingdom of Judah (chap. 7).

After making this general statement regarding these two kingdoms, the prophet devoted the rest of the oracle to the fate that would overcome the kingdom of Ephraim. He foretold that the time would come when "the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean" (vs. 4). He compared the condition of this northern kingdom with that of the harvester gathering the standing grain as when one "gleaneth ears in the valley of Rephaim." This valley was at the southern outskirts of the city of Jerusalem. Just as the harvester and those gathering olives would leave the gleanings in the field for the poor of the land, so, declared the prophet, there would be left in Israel the gleanings only of its civilization, culture, and inhabitants. This fact is set forth in verse 6.

The prophecy regarding the destruction of Babylon and that of Ephraim are, by most interpreters, explained as being fulfilled in the invasion and desolation wrought by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, who rejuvenated the tottering Assyrian Empire when he came to the throne in 744 B.C. His reign extended to 727 B. C. This information is gleaned from profane history of those times.

In Isaiah 17:7,8, however, it is quite evident that the prophet lifted up his eyes from beholding the devastation wrought by Tiglath-pileser III and beheld the end of the age, foretelling the destruction that would come at that future

time. This position becomes evident when we note the following language: "In that day shall men look unto their Maker, and their eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And they shall not look to the altars, the work of their hands; neither shall they have respect to that which their fingers have made, either the Asherim, or the sun-images. In that day shall their strong cities be as the forsaken places in the wood and on the mountain top, which were forsaken from before the children of Israel; and it shall be a desolation" (Isa. 17:7-9). In verse 7 is a universal prediction that all men will, at the time foreseen, look unto their Maker and their eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. Then they will no longer look to their altars, the work of their hands, nor to anything which they have devised in the form of worship. We know positively that they did not do anything like this at the time of the immediate fulfillment of verses 1-6 of this prophecy. On the contrary, we understand that at the conclusion of the Tribulation men will look to God and He will spare them. Thus, between verses 6 and 7 of our prophecy, we have the long lapse of time intervening between the days of Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria and the days of the Tribulation which are yet future.

But why will there be such universal wreckage at this future time—especially in Israel? The answer to this question is found in verses 10 and 11: "For thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength; therefore thou plantest pleasant plants, and settest it with strange slips. In the day of thy planting thou hedgest it in, and in the morning thou makest thy seed to blossom; but the harvest fleeth away in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow."

To be out of the will of God is to have trouble and to invite disaster. Such is inevitable. God must punish all disobedience. It is quite clear from this connection that this judgment will be due solely to the fact that Israel has forgotten the God of her salvation and has not been mindful of the God of her strength. But in this prophecy we are told that Israel will plant pleasant plants and will set out strange slips. There are two interpretations of this statement. One is that in ancient times certain types of plants were placed in gardens in connection with various cults, such as that of Adonis. This is altogether possible. The other interpretation is that it looked forward to the end of the age when the Zionist movement is attempting to build up their home-land by an afforestation program such as is in progress today. Those taking this position interpret this passage of scripture as depicting an effort to rehabilitate the nation in the land of the fathers independent of God. This understanding likewise is possible, in view of the facts of the context. However, one cannot be positive as to which one is meant.

Regardless of which view we take, we see from verse 11 that all human efforts will fail "in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow." There can be no doubt that the quotation, "the day of grief and of desperate sorrow," refers to the time of the great Tribulation which is called "the time of Jacob's trouble." There will be nothing from the standpoint of human nature upon which Israel at that time can depend. Her extremity, however, will be God's opportunity.

In the last paragraph of chapter 17 we have a prediction of the great Tribulation Period in the following words: "Ah, the uproar of many peoples, that roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but he shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the storm. At eventide, behold, terror; before the morning they are not. This is the portion of them that despoil us, and the lot of them that rob us" (Isa. 17:12-14). Here the invasion of Palestine by the nations of the world is compared to that of the roaring of the billows of the sea. In the war of the great day of God, the Almighty, the armies of the world will be gathered together in Palestine and its environs to make the final assault upon Messiah who will return at the end of the Tribulation in glory and power and who will defeat utterly all the forces of the nations. This fact is shown in such passages as Zechariah, chapter 14, and Revelation 19:19-21. Suddenly, according to Isaiah 17:14, the victory will come and Israel will be delivered.

THE ORACLES REGARDING THE NATIONS

(Chapters 13:1-23:18)

III. ETHIOPIA AND EGYPT

Chapters 18, 19, 20

Conclusion of Oracle Concerning Damascus

In the present study we shall consider chapters 18, 19, and 20. On account of the lack of space, I had to conclude last month's article with chapter 17 whereas chapter 18 is an integral part with chapter 17, both of which constitute the one oracle directed to Damascus. Whenever chapter 18 is detached from 17, one fails to set the eighteenth chapter in its proper perspective and forces an erroneous interpretation upon it. Only when we recognize that these two chapters constitute a single unit can we approach the eighteenth chapter intelligently.

Let us remember that the first three verses of chapter 17 speak directly concerning Damascus and the northern kingdom of Israel, both of which had entered into a political and military agreement against Judah, as we saw in chapter 7. Because of their constituting a single confederacy, they are mentioned in this oracle together. Beginning with verse 4, however, the prophet was led to consider not only Damascus and the northern kingdom of Israel but also Judah, because the latter was connected with the kingdom of Israel by blood ties. Thus the prophet saw the same flood-tide of an invasion which would strike Damascus, rushing on down into the northern kingdom and through it to the southern kingdom and wreaking havoc. When we reach verse 7, however, we see that Isaiah, following the law of double reference, raised his eyes and looked out to the conclusion of this age and saw the mighty revival that will spring up in Judah and sweep the entire world—in the time of Jacob's trouble. "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). The reason for Israel's bearing the brunt of the judgments of the Tribulation is that she has forsaken her God and has not been mindful of the rock of her strength (17:10).

Continuing the description of the judgments that will come upon Israel in the time of the Tribulation, the prophet compared the invasion of Palestine by the nations of the world to that of the uproaring and the noise of mighty rushing waters. But in the nick of time Israel will be delivered as we see in 17:14. This permanent deliverance will come at the end of the Tribulation as we know by the study of parallel passages.

The Prophet Addresses Ethiopia

In a most dramatic manner the prophet, continuing the thought of the final victory and deliverance of Israel, looked toward the southeast and addressed the nation of Ethiopia as we see in chapter 18, verse 1. This country is described as being "beyond the rivers of Ethiopia," as "the land of the rustling of wings," and the land which the rivers divide or encompass or drain. The rivers of Ethiopia are the Blue Nile and the White Nile which drain the tableland of Ethiopia and which flow through the Egyptian Sudan. They unite at Khartoum to form the Nile proper. Thus the land which is addressed is beyond these two rivers and is spoken of as *Cush* or *Ethiopia*. It is furthermore designated, as stated above, as "the land of the rustling of wings." Travelers tell us that Ethiopia swarms with flies and insects as well as with tropical birds and fowls. This is largely due to the fact that it has a tropical climate and the rainfall is indeed great. A survey of the best commentaries shows that the consensus of sound, sane scholarship is to the effect that the country of Ethiopia is here spoken of by the prophet. Unfortunately many wild guesses have been made and this language has been interpreted in different ways. Some take the position that it refers to the land between the Euphrates and the Nile rivers, especially

Palestine. There are others who say that this prophecy refers to the United States of America. Such interpretations are fanciful and built upon slim and flimsy foundations.

Isaiah saw Ethiopia sending her ambassadors in vessels of papyrus upon the waters of the Nile. The word in the Hebrew rendered *papyrus* is derived from a word which indicates *to swallow* and in the Hiphil verb stem it means *to cause to drink water*. The papyrus plant grows only in soil that is well saturated with water. Because of this fact it was given the name in the Hebrew tongue which indicates this fact. Some very fanciful interpretations have been suggested because of the use of this Hebrew word. For instance, these vessels of papyrus of which Isaiah speaks are interpreted as being steamboats. The reason for such an explanation is that sailboats do not use water but steamboats do use it as a propelling power; therefore these are called steamboats. One has to play upon his imagination and read into the text much in order to arrive at such an interpretation. Boats made of papyrus were in constant use in ancient Egypt and Ethiopia. Isaiah's audience would naturally think that the prophet meant what he said since there is nothing in the context to indicate a departure from the literal meaning of the word. We should go and do likewise and avoid all spectacular theories and interpretations, taking every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the context indicate clearly otherwise. Since there are no such indications, we must accept the position that Isaiah was talking about literal boats made of papyrus.

In the Revised Version the translators have supplied the word *saying* before the words, "Go, ye ..." (vs. 2). This fact is indicated by their putting the word *saying* in italics. They thought that the context demanded their inserting this word, but they have been true to us in letting us know that they have supplied it. In my judgment they made a mistake in doing this. They changed the meaning of the entire passage thereby. When this word is supplied, the oracle means that the authorities in Ethiopia send messengers to a nation "tall and smooth, to a people terrible from their beginning." Thus understood, the nation tall and smooth is different from the Ethiopians. When one looks at verse 7, he sees that the Ethiopian people are the ones who are said to be tall and smooth and terrible from their beginning and who send an offering to Zion in worship to Jehovah. By adopting the interpretation demanded by the word *saying*, we have the people tall and smooth a race different from the Ethiopians; but, according to verse 7, they themselves are the tall and smooth people. Thus this interpretation makes the passage contradict itself. Since there are no contradictions in the Word of God, this interpretation must be discarded.

When we remember that chapter 18 is a part of the oracle begun in chapter 17 and also recall the fact that the first of the prophecy foretells the aggressive campaigns of the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, against Syria, Israel, and Judah, and when we also remember that Judah was in southern Palestine and close to Egypt, the military campaigns of the Assyrian against these small countries would be a threat against Egypt. We must also recognize the fact that Ethiopia and Egypt were very closely allied one with the other during their history. Moreover, we must keep in mind the fact that after Isaiah's time the Ethiopian kings conquered Egypt, which became a part of the Ethiopian Empire. The aggressiveness of Assyria in the countries so very close to Egypt would create great concern on the part of the Ethiopian king. Isaiah, therefore, looking forward into the future and seeing the approach of Sennacherib's forces toward the Egyptian borders, foretold the consternation at the Ethiopian court that would be caused by this aggressiveness. In the days of Esarhaddon, the son and successor of Sennacherib, the danger became real, for he overran Egypt and conquered it as we shall see later. Moreover, Isaiah saw that the Ethiopian king would dispatch messengers throughout all his realm in preparation for defensive action against the aggressor. This feverish activity of mobilization is what is seen in 18:1 and the first part of verse 2. A period should be placed after the word, waters, because the sentence closes there.

A new paragraph should begin with the words, "Go ye ..." From this sentence to the close of the chapter Isaiah is speaking to these ambassadors who have gone to every part of the Egypto-Ethiopian Empire. He gives them a message for them to take back to the king in Ethiopia. The political and military situations which are reflected in these oracles of

Isaiah furnish the background for an additional revelation relating to the distant future. This oracle of Isaiah, chapter 18, is an example of the law of double reference—the blending of the description of a near event with that of one remotely in the future. That this is an illustration of this law becomes abundantly evident to a person who remembers that chapter 18 is an enlargement of 17:12-14 when he sees the real import of the message of chapter 18—as we shall presently learn.

Now let us note that in 18:2b the prophet addresses these ambassadors who have been dispatched from the Ethiopian court and tells them to return home and deliver the message found in verse 3: "All ye inhabitants of the world, and ye dwellers on the earth, when an ensign is lifted up on the mountains, see ye; and when the trumpet is blown, hear ye." This verse is indeed dramatic. When these ambassadors return to the imperial court of Ethiopia, they are to announce the oracle to the world which the prophet Isaiah utters. They are to call upon the inhabitants of the world to watch for the lifting up of an ensign and to listen to the blowing of the trumpet.

Various fanciful interpretations have been placed upon this verse. There are those who tell us that the lifting up of the ensign and the blowing of the trumpet is a prediction of the return of the Jews to Palestine in the end of the age. Others inform us that it refers to the hoisting of the Zionistic flag and the blowing of the shofar by the Jews at the conclusion of World War I when the children of Israel were permitted by the terms of the Balfour Declaration and the Versailles Treaty to return to the land of their fathers. But will the grammar of this passage justify such interpretations? My answer is a most emphatic negative. We must remember that "a text apart from its context is a pretext." Look at verse 4. It begins with the coordinating conjunction "for." This word introduces a sentence which is explanatory of verse 3—a prediction the meaning of which we wish to learn. Verse 5 likewise is joined to verse 4 with the same conjunction "for." This fact proves that verse 5 is a further explanation of the prophecy. An examination of verse 6 shows that it is still discussing the subject introduced in verses 4 and 5. Verses 4, 5, and 6 therefore constitute a grammatical and logical unit which is explanatory of the prophecy the meaning of which we are seeking.

In order that the reader might more readily understand this prophecy, I am quoting verses 4, 5, and 6:

4 For thus hath Jehovah said unto me, I will be still, and I will behold in my dwelling-place, like clear heat in sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. 5 For before the harvest, when the blossom is over, and the flower becometh a ripening grape, he will cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and the spreading branches will he take away and cut down. 6 They shall be left together unto the ravenous birds of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth; and the ravenous birds shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.

In verse 4 the prophet speaks as God's personal representative, using the personal pronouns, I and my. But in verse 5 the point of view is shifted. The prophet speaks for himself in explaining the actions of Jehovah. In verse 6 he presents the result of the actions of Jehovah.

A reading of these verses shows that God is represented as being seated in the heavens and looking upon the earth and observing the normal movement and development of the nations which are allowed, without any divine intervention, to move in their regular manner and to carry out the natural program of their choices. This situation is compared to the Lord's looking upon the growth of grapevines during the growing season—from the time of the blossom until the grapes begin to ripen. During the summer weather—the growing time—the heat is seen to rise during the daytime but the moisture is observed in the form of dew during the cool of the nights. Such weather in the summer is conducive to the normal growth and development of the grapes from the time of blossom to that of the ripening fruit.

Just before the grapes become ripe, Jehovah prunes the vines, cutting off all the branches and allowing them to fall upon the ground to wither and die. Then the ravenous birds of the heavens and the beasts of the fields come and feed upon them and roost upon them, according to verse 6.

Since the prophet was dealing with the political and military situations which he saw in prophetic vision, we know that he was not talking about literal grapevines. The facts of the entire prophecy demand that we understand by this dramatic language an oracle concerning God's destruction of the many nations and peoples that will invade Palestine in the end of the age as set forth in chapter 17, verses 12-14. In chapter 10, as we have already seen, the Lord compared Sennacherib and his army to a forest of trees which He himself would cut down (Isa. 10:15-19,33,34). This prediction was fulfilled in the destruction of the Assyrian army as is seen in Isaiah 37:36-38. The Lord destroyed the Assyrian forest then, but that was just a little sample of the wreckage in the overthrow of the nations, which will eventually invade Palestine in the end-time. At that time He will remain seated in the heavens and will allow these nations to carry out their plans and purposes unrestricted by the divine hand—up to a given point. He will allow the grapes to develop from the blossom stage to that of beginning to ripen. Speaking differently, I would say that He will allow the nations to follow their own course up to a given point; then He will intervene, will become the true husbandman, will cut off the branches with their ripening grapes, and will destroy the vines of the nations. Such is the message of Isaiah 18:4-6. This description of the destruction of the nations in the end-time is an explanation of the oracle found in 18:3 which the Ethiopian ambassadors who return to their native court are to announce to the world—according to the dramatic language of verse 3.

When we study other passages which deal with the same future events, we see that the nations will send their armies into Palestine and will besiege Jerusalem. The war will be fought very ferociously. Blood will flow as never before. At the critical moment Jehovah himself will appear upon the scene, will take the situation in hand, and will cause all wars to cease. (See Zech., chap. 14, and parallel passages.) At that time Jehovah will become King over all the world. He will lift the curse from the earth and establish His glorious reign.

When that is done, Jerusalem will become the capital of the world. The nations will go there to worship Jehovah of hosts, the great King, and to be taught of Him. (See Isa. 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-8; also Ps. 72.)

In that day the Ethiopians, "a people tall and smooth, even ... a people terrible from their beginning onward," will send their offerings to Jehovah of hosts at Jerusalem. Such is the message of Isaiah 18:7. This prediction is in perfect agreement with the one found in Psalm 68:29-35. A close examination of Psalm 68—especially verses 19-35 shows that this passage deals with the great Millennial Age when the Lord Jesus Christ will be reigning upon the earth. The princes of Ethiopia are here represented as stretching their hands out to Him in worship. Zephaniah, who prophesied in the days of King Josiah, likewise foretold that the Ethiopians will come and will bring offerings in worship to God (Zeph. 3:10). An examination of this context shows that the prophet was speaking of the great Millennial Age. Thus all those passages which speak specifically of Ethiopia and her worshiping God refer to the conversion of the Ethiopians during the Millennial Age.

Why are the Ethiopians singled out in such a conspicuous manner and presented as being worshipers of God during the Millennium? The answer seems to be that they were on the farthest horizon of the political heavens of the prophet's day. This fact must not be confused with the additional truth that the prophet realized the rotundity of the earth. Isaiah knew that the world was round, for he declared this conviction in chapter 40, verse 22.

The Oracle Concerning Egypt

In Isaiah, chapter 19, we have an oracle concerning the land of Egypt. This country plays a very important role in the Scriptures. There the chosen race developed into a nation. There were continual commercial relations between Palestine and Egypt throughout the centuries. Palestine was the bridge of the nations of antiquity. Babylon, Assyria, and Syria crossed through Palestine on their way to Egypt and vice versa. Thus both commercial caravans and military expeditions passed through Palestine during the past. In view of these facts we are not surprised to hear the prophet speaking of Egypt

as well as other prominent countries and foretelling their future and their ultimate doom. In connection with our study of Isaiah, chapter 19, we should read carefully Jeremiah, chapter 46, and Ezekiel, chapters 29-32.

In Isaiah 19:1 the prophet saw Jehovah riding upon a swift cloud and coming against Egypt in judgment. This description is similar to that which is found in Psalm 18:10-19. At His second coming Jehovah will appear upon the clouds of heaven and will fight against the nations gathered to Jerusalem as He fought in the day of battle (Zech. 14:3). Thus the strong Son of God in His prenatal state has, according to this verse, gone forth and fought at various times against enemies. He delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. He is the one who is spoken of as "the angel of Jehovah." He always veiled His presence in clouds of glory. Nahum spoke of His coming to the earth in judgment, in chapter 1, verses 2-8. Thus Isaiah's representation of the coming of the Lord to Egypt is in perfect accord with the usual representation of His coming in judgment.

According to Isaiah 19:1, when the Lord does come in judgment, the heart of Egypt will melt in the midst of it. This language evidently describes the terror that is caused to the people of the land under the sledgehammer blows of Almighty God's strokes of judgment.

Isaiah 19:2,3 refers to a civil war which would affect Egypt from end to end. God would stir up Egyptian against Egyptian; city against city; kingdom against kingdom. These expressions refer to a civil war that would affect the entire nation, since the oracle was one pertaining specifically to Egypt. In Matthew 24:7 the Lord used the same idiom when He was looking out upon the world at the end of this age. Since the expression refers to a war that affects all the territory before the speaker's vision at the time of his utterance, and since Jesus had a world outlook, His language therefore indicated a world war as the sign of the end of the age. (For a full discussion of the "Olivet Discourse" see my volume: *Future Events Revealed*.)

According to this oracle the spirit of Egypt would fail. This is the biblical way of speaking of the decline of the morale of the people. Moreover, in this connection the prophet foretold that God would destroy "the counsel" of the nation. There upon the people would resort to fortune-tellers, charmers, witches, and wizards, all of which things are simply a manifestation of demonism—spiritism.

The outcome of this civil war would be that there would arise a king who would be "a cruel lord ... a fierce king" over the country.

The war here foretold is possibly that which broke out all over Egypt after the overthrow of the Ethiopian king, Taharka, in 672 B.C. The country fell to pieces and was ruled by twelve princes whose administration is called the Dodekarchy. This state of affairs continued for about half a century. Then Psammetichus united these various political fragments into a strong kingdom. He established a totalitarian dictatorship of the severest kind. It is quite likely that he is the one who is here called the cruel lord and fierce king. According to the old chronology he ascended the throne in 616 B.C. and continued until 597.

An examination of Isaiah 19:5-10 discloses the fact that in addition to the civil war which would wreck the country, there would also be the drying up of the Nile River which would prove to be a national calamity. The Nile ceased to flow several centuries before the days of Joseph. Then in his time there was a famine in the land for seven years, caused by the drying up of the Nile. Isaiah, in this special paragraph which we are studying, likewise foretold the ceasing of the yearly inundation of Egypt by the Nile. As a result the fisheries would be stopped, the manufacture of linen cloth for the priests and for the wrapping of mummies, and the manufacture of cotton for the great masses of Egypt would cease. General distress would be the result. All industry alike would cease. The waters would no longer be in the canals, the fields would be reduced to dust, and the topsoil would be blown off by the wind. The country from end to end would be one great desolation and waste.

In the paragraph consisting of verses 11-15 inclusive, we have a record of the judgment of God that would fall upon the king and his advisors. Mention is made of the princes of Zoan who were the advisers and counselors of Pharaoh. They would be unable to foretell events or advise the king what he should do under each circumstance. Isaiah, seeing them thus baffled, asked them where was their wisdom and challenged them to disclose to Pharaoh the purpose of God relative to Egypt.

Finally, in verses 14 and 15, he explained why it was that these counselors would be unable to advise their sovereign. The reason is stated as follows: God would put a spirit of perverseness in the midst of Egypt and the counselors of the king, being unable to see the correct situation, would improperly advise the king. Thus nothing but wreckage and ruin could result from such an administration of affairs.

Verses 16 and 17 constitute a transitional paragraph between the threat of judgment in verses 1-15 and the promise of blessing in verses 18-25. Isaiah said that in the days when the prophecy which he had just been giving would be fulfilled, the Egyptians would become like women and would tremble and fear because of the shaking of the hand of Almighty God over the country in judgment. Moreover, the Egyptians would become afraid of the little kingdom of Judah because in some way or other they would connect their predicament with the judgment of the God who was known in Judah.

The dark picture thrown upon our figurative screen in verses 1-15 disappears and gives way to a brighter and more glorious one in verses 18-25. In verse 18 we see a prediction that there would be five cities in the land of Egypt that would speak the language of Canaan, the Hebrew language, and swear by Jehovah of hosts. One of these cities was, according to Isaiah, to be called "the city of destruction" or the city of the sun. Isaiah looked out into the future from his day and saw the colonization of certain Jews in Egypt. That there were Jews in Egypt after the overthrow of the Jewish state by Nebuchadnezzar is confirmed by the messages of Jeremiah. Those who fled at the time of the Babylonian captivity into Egypt are the ones who constitute the subject of this prophecy. Profane history tells us of the settlement of Jews in Lower Egypt under the leadership of the high priest Onias IV and of a temple to Jehovah in which the Jews of that section worshipped. We also know that at Aswan in Upper Egypt there was a colony of Jews who also had a temple that proved almost a rival to the one in Jerusalem. Much information has been gathered from the papyrus fragments recovered from that ancient Jewish community.

In verses 19 and 20 the prophet declares that "In that day shall there be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to Jehovah. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto Jehovah of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they shall cry unto Jehovah because of oppressors, and he will send them a saviour, and a defender, and he will deliver them!" Unfortunately many good, sincere people have erroneously identified the altar and pillar mentioned in this passage as referring to the great pyramid at Gizeh in the western outskirts of Cairo. Isaiah was looking out into the future. In his day the pyramids were hoary with age. If we allow the language to give its real message, we cannot by even the greatest stretch of the imagination interpret the prophet as referring to any of the pyramids, or to the great one of Gizeh. His statement is that there would be an altar in the midst of Egypt, and a pillar at the border of the same. The pyramid is neither an altar nor an obelisk, a memorial shaft dedicated to Jehovah. In view of the fact that there has been nothing that could logically be interpreted as the fulfillment of these verses, we must look into the future for the fulfillment of this prediction. It is quite likely that Jews will yet colonize in Egypt and will set up some kind of special worship similar to that of the temple service in Jerusalem and there attempt to worship God. Moreover they will probably erect an obelisk or an altar similar to the one which was made by the two and a half tribes of Israel at the time of their settlement in Canaan (see Joshua 22:10-12).

These Jews who will yet settle in Egypt will have a certain amount of influence on the Egyptians in pointing them to the worship of the true God. This seems to be intimated in 19:21,22.

These developments will be followed by the judgments of the great Tribulation for we are told that at that time God will smite and will also heal Egypt, and that He will be entreated by her.

The oracle concludes by foretelling that there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria which undoubtedly will lead through Jerusalem. Isaiah, in chapter 35, spoke of a highway. From the context we see that one will be in existence during the millennial reign of our Lord—after He has come and has delivered Israel. It is most highly probable that this highway mentioned in Isaiah, chapter 19, is the same one as the one spoken of in chapter 35.

At that time the Assyrians will be converted to God and Messiah and so the Egyptians will also be. Thus we are told in verses 24 and 25 that the Egyptians and the Assyrians will be accepted along with the Israelites by the God of the universe. Thus closes this marvelous oracle concerning the future which awaits the Egyptians.

An Appendix to the Oracle Concerning Egypt

This oracle concerning Egypt found in chapter 19 has chapter 20 as an appendix. This is an oracle that deals with a situation which is now past. It was uttered in the year that the Tartan of the Assyrian army came to Ashdod when Sargon, king of Assyria, sent and fought against that city. In this oracle Isaiah was commanded to remove his outer garments and the sackcloth which he, like Elijah, had worn and to retain nothing but his short tunic. He was to dress thus as a captive and walk about the streets of Jerusalem at certain periods for three years. This conduct was a prophecy being enacted before the people. The significance of this action was that the Ethiopians and the Egyptians would be carried captive into the land of Assyria by the king of Assyria. Neither Sargon nor Sennacherib invaded and conquered Egypt. Esarhaddon and his son Ashurbanipal did this and fulfilled the prophecy. The peoples of the coastlands would become disappointed in that the empire upon which they had depended for deliverance was to be taken into captivity.

THE ORACLES REGARDING THE NATIONS

(Chapters 13:1-23:18)

IV. BURDENS CONCERNING THE NATIONS COMPLETED

Chapters 21-23

In this month's study we shall complete the burdens concerning the nations, which are found in Isaiah, chapters 13 to 23 inclusive. In the present installment we shall study chapters 21-23. We are unfortunate in that we do not have more space and time to devote to each of these oracles because they are freighted with great meaning.

The Burden Concerning Babylon ("the wilderness of the sea")

This oracle begins with the statement, "The burden of the wilderness of the sea." But from verse 9 we see that it is one which pertains to Babylon. An examination of this oracle with the three following shows that these are symbolic titles. Doubtless this imagery was suggested by the fact that in Lower Mesopotamia often the Euphrates River overflowed its banks and formed vast stretches of water which had the appearance of a sea. The prophet therefore, in speaking of Babylon and of the vision which he had concerning it, called it the burden of "the wilderness of the sea." He of course was in Jerusalem which he compared to a watchtower and himself to a watchman—as we shall see later in this discussion. He was familiar with the storms of dust and the whirlwinds that would sweep the open country around Babylon. They came up from the east and from the south as a rule.

In vision he saw a caravan of the Medes and Elamites coming up from the southeast as they were wending their way through the desert advancing against Babylon. He therefore compared this caravan of troops to that of the whirlwind.

In verses 3 and 4 the prophet spoke about the distress which the vision caused him. He was very tenderhearted and his soul went out in sympathy to the heathen peoples who were in distress. In verse 5 Isaiah, by prophetic vision, gave us a glimpse of the banquet hall in the city of Babylon at the time of the impending siege. He saw the servants preparing the tables, sentinels being placed on guard, then the guests eating and drinking. In the midst of the feast the invaders were approaching. He therefore addressed the banqueters by saying, "rise up, ye princes, anoint the shield." But they, not suspecting any evil, were enjoying the festivities of the hour.

His exhortation to the princes to anoint the shield and prepare for the coming onslaught is based upon the revelation which God gave to him and is found in verses 6 and 7. In these verses we see that the prophet thought of Jerusalem as the watch tower and of his being instructed by the Lord to have a watchman located there in order to observe what was going on and to report if he saw a caravan of troops, horsemen, asses, and camels approaching. Suddenly this watchman, thus stationed in his imaginary tower, cried out like the roar of a lion, declaring that he had been there watching and that suddenly he saw a troop of men and horsemen in pairs. They of course were coming from the southeast and were approaching Babylon. They passed out of his view.

Then suddenly certain ones emerged from the captured city and made this announcement: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the graven images of her gods are broken unto the ground." In this graphic, pictorial manner the prophet portrayed the unexpected attack upon and the sudden downfall of the city of Babylon. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Medes and the Elamites came against it, as is indicated in verse 2 of this chapter.

According to verse 10 the prophet addressed his "threshing, and the grain" of his floor. This figure again presents Babylon as the threshing floor and the natives together with Israel in captivity as that which is threshed. The grain which is winnowed is the faithful remnant which He would restore to the land of the fathers after the Babylonian captivity. This prediction was fulfilled in the restoration under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest.

The prophet concludes this prediction by saying that he had declared unto his auditors the things which the God of Israel, Jehovah of hosts, had told him.

This prediction in 21:1-10 is supplemental to the one found in chapters 13 and 14, which we have already studied. What is revealed in chapter 21 is an enlargement upon verses 17 and 18 of chapter 13. As we saw in our previous study regarding Babylon, the rest of the original prophecy in chapters 13 and 14 deal exclusively with Babylon and its overthrow in the end of this age.

The Burden of Dumah

This vision is found in verses 11 and 12 of Isaiah, chapter 21. Here again we have a symbolic vision. The word *Dumah* means silence, quietude. There was no city, so far as we know, in Edom by that name. The prophet thought of that country as being in the stillness and quietness of night. He himself was the watchman upon the watch-tower of Zion. He could look out into the future and forecast coming events. Thus an anxious inquirer down in Edom shouted to him out of the midst of the appalling night which had settled down over the country and asked him saying, "Watchman, what of the night?" He repeated this question, being very eager for the information.

Isaiah, the watchman addressed, answered: "The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: turn ye, come." Thus by the prophetic vision the prophet foretold that that pall of night which had settled down over the country of Edom would pass away and that the morning of liberty and freedom would come to the land. Such is the significance of the statement, "The morning cometh."

But he also warned them that another night would follow that day. He gave no hope, however, that that night would cease and be followed by another day. In keeping with the implication of this statement is the revelation concerning Edom found in Isaiah, chapter 34. The stroke of judgment will fall upon Edom during the Tribulation and that country will be under the curse, together with Babylon, during the great Millennial Era of our Lord's reign. Because of this fact, doubtless, Isaiah declared that the night would come. But he spoke to those who were seeking for the truth and declared, "If ye will inquire, inquire ye: turn ye, come." In substance he said to them that, if they wished to inquire, they should do so. The implication of this statement is that he was willing to give them the information which they might desire but that he gave them some additional advice by saying, "Turn ye, come." In this exhortation he urged them to come back again to him and inquire for information and assured them that they would have a hearty welcome should they desire more of the truth of God.

Thus ends this short yet mysterious oracle concerning Edom.

The Burden upon Arabia

In Isaiah 21:13-17 we have the third symbolic vision. This is addressed to Arabia. The word in the original which is here rendered "Arabia" also may be interpreted differently and mean "evening." Some of the very best commentators are of the opinion that this rendering is possible, believing that the prophet in his mystical manner thought of Arabia as being in the evening or twilight of its historical past.

An examination of the complete thought of this short prophecy shows that a war was foretold which would sweep through the country and devastate its villages and cities. Because of the ravages of war the regular caravans that traversed the desert, taking the wares of the east doubtless to Tyre, which was on the Syrian coast and which was at that time the mart of the world, are seen going farther north in order to escape the ravages of war. We see the fugitives from the war-stricken areas fleeing and being entertained with the bare necessities of life—water and bread—as they escape for their lives. According to verse 16 the prophet declared that the war which he foretold would come within one year. Kedar, one

of the principal cities, would be reduced to insignificance. He guaranteed that the prophecy would be fulfilled for, "Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath spoken it."

The Burden of the Valley of Vision

In 22:1-14 we have the fourth symbolic vision of this series. An examination of this oracle shows that the prophet was speaking of Jerusalem which he had already compared to his watchtower. In this last oracle he changed his point of view and spoke of the city where he lived and from which he delivered his prophecies as being in a valley. A visit to Jerusalem and a view of the city from the Mount of Olives on the east or from the south or west will show that ancient Jerusalem was really in a valley—although it was located upon the four hills which were enclosed within its walls. The Kidron Valley on the east separates the city proper from the Mount of Olives. The Valley of the Son of Hinnom begins on the west side of the city, extends to the southwest corner and then turns at a right angle toward the east, running along the south side of the city and finally meets the Tyropean Valley south of the Temple area and ultimately runs into the Kidron Valley. On the north side of the city the land gradually slopes upward, thus literally Jerusalem was located in a valley which was on the top of the hills of Judaea. The writer of Psalm 125 spoke of the mountains as surrounding Jerusalem.

It is supposed by some that possibly Isaiah's home was in the Tyropean Valley near the extreme south part of the city. This circumstance coupled to the additional fact that the city was surrounded by valleys is sufficient justification for the prophet's speaking of the oracle concerning the city as the "burden of the valley of vision."

It is quite likely that this oracle was uttered during the reign of Ahaz but it looked forward to the siege of Jerusalem later by Sennacherib, who came against the city in the reign of Hezekiah. We have already seen from chapter 7 that impious Ahaz entered into an alliance with Assyria in order to obtain help against the two confederated kings of Syria and Israel. Thus by this unholy alliance Judah was brought into the orbit of Assyrian influence which proved all but fatal to the little struggling kingdom as we shall presently see.

According to verse 2 of this chapter this city as a rule was given over to frivolity and worldly pleasure. The people were not concerned very much about God and worshiping Him. In the vision, however, the prophet saw this joyful city thrown into consternation. The people had gone upon the housetops and were watching the besieging armies in their various activities as the enemy laid siege to the city. During this time the death toll ran very high. The people were not slain with the sword but by famine and pestilence. The sight of the vision was so very grievous that the prophet looked away and wept bitterly for the destruction of his people.

From verse 5 we see that in the great distress of the time foreseen by the prophet the people were actually tearing down their houses and using the material in repairing breaches in the city's wall. Outside in the valleys were the chariots and the besieging forces.

According to verse 8 the Lord, by the stern realities of a siege, brought the city's inhabitants to the point where they realized the seriousness of the situation and thus their self-confidence was removed, which is here spoken of as "the covering of Judah." When they came to the realization that a real siege and a time of distress was upon them, instead of looking to God for deliverance they turned to the arsenal, "the armor in the house of the forest."

As a further precaution and preparation against a long siege, a wall was built from Mount Ophel in the southeast part of the city to Mount Zion in the southwest part. This wall of course passed through the Tyropean Valley and added much new territory to that within the walls. The waters from Gihon (the Virgin Fountain) in the Kidron Valley was brought by a tunnel which was made under Ophel into the reservoir in the southern portion of the Tyropean Valley. Thus a water supply was insured to the city. This fact is seen in verses 9-11.

From a reading of verses 5-11 we see that, when the seriousness of the situation was realized by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, they no longer relied upon God but upon their own efforts at preparing themselves for the sufferings of the long siege. The inhabitants, according to verse 11, forgot that God had foretold these things, that He had a plan and a purpose, and that the end of all things had been foreseen by the Lord from the beginning. While God lets man exercise his own choices, yet He overrules and makes everything contribute to the advance of His eternal plan and purpose. (In order to see more clearly the force of the oracle and the things which I have just been saying, the reader should examine carefully the maps in the back of his Bible, especially that of ancient Jerusalem. Such a study will make this oracle of the Prophet Isaiah clearer and will be most illuminating to the student.)

Every calamity which the Lord brings into the life of any of his servants is designed for his good. This is a general principle which obtains at all times. Thus God's permitting the Assyrians to come against Jerusalem was His chastisement of His ancient people and was a call to weeping, mourning, and to the girding on of sackcloth. This fact is stated in verse 12 of this prophecy.

Instead of Israel's realizing her sin and delinquencies and God's call to repentance, she on the other hand took a light view of the situation and went on in her regular way of frivolity and pleasure. The prophet therefore said in foretelling the event, "... behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die." In that calamity God was calling them to repentance. They refused to acknowledge Him but continued in their ungodliness. The Lord therefore made known to Isaiah, according to verse 14, that such an attitude was unpardonable: "Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you till ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts." Such utter disregard of God and His over-ruling, providential acts could be atoned for only by the death of those who assumed such an ungodly attitude, declared the prophet. The principle here enunciated is the same as that set forth in Numbers 35:33, where legislation is set forth decreeing that, whenever blood is shed in the land expiation could be made for it only by the shedding of the blood of him who committed the murder. Thus when the punishment was administered to the murderer, satisfaction legally was made for the shedding of this blood. This carnal, indifferent, defiant attitude on the part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem could therefore be atoned for or expiated, declared the prophet, only by the death of those thus assuming it. As to whether or not the judgment here threatened involved eternal consequences, one cannot say.

In this connection let us remember that, when people humble themselves before God, He most graciously forgives as is set forth in the case of Isaiah, chapter 6. The prophet saw his undone condition. He confessed his sins and implored divine mercy. When men will not accept the grace of God and His free pardoning mercy, the Lord must deal with them on the basis of merit and works. Satisfaction must be demanded.

When the prophet had completed his oracle concerning this future siege and distress of his beloved home town, the Lord gave him a message concerning Shebna who was the treasurer of the city. At the time of the oracle this man was superintending the hewing out of a sepulchre for himself among the tombs of the nobility of the land. I have walked among the sepulchers of the kings of Judah which are located on the eastern slopes of Mount Zion a little below the Church of the Cockcrow. The position of these sepulchers is, from the standpoint of the Tyropean Valley where Isaiah likely lived, high up on the mountainside as is indicated in verse 16. Shebna, this high government official, was an unworthy man. His moral and spiritual character disqualified him for such a position as the one which he was occupying. Unfortunately, now as then, many unworthy men are appointed to public offices and administer affairs in which the welfare of the masses is involved. Unhappy indeed are the people who are thus forced to live under the rule and administration of such unworthy officials.

Isaiah the prophet was therefore commissioned to go and make an announcement to this man that the Lord was going to depose him from his position and cast him away from the dignity and honor which had been heaped upon him. His place was to be filled by Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah. According to the custom prevailing in Israel, the robe of the one in

office was to be passed on to his successor. This is seen in the case of Elijah who was succeeded by Elisha the prophet (I Kings 19:19).

When Eliakim was thus invested with the authority of the office, Shebna's government and authority passed into the former's hands. This transfer of authority is set forth in the following words: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his (Eliakim's) shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (vs. 22). The key was the symbol of authority to open and to shut the gates. Whenever a city in the ancient Orient surrendered, those officiating in the negotiations for the captured community brought forth the keys of the gates of the city and turned them over to the conquerors. By this ceremony the surrender was indicated. The authority of the government was therefore symbolically transferred from Shebna to Eliakim (vs. 22). The Lord compares him to a nail driven in a tent post. According to oriental custom all the heirlooms of the family and the prized treasures were hung upon it. Thus the Lord declared that He would hang upon Eliakim all the glory and the honor of his father's house.

But very few people can stand to be greatly honored by men. The natural heart is prone to pride, deceit, and conceit. Pride, we are told, always goes before a fall. Eliakim, so declared the prophet, would, in his position of authority, power, and glory, fail; and like a nail upon which a very heavy load has been hung would give way. Thus all the glory bestowed upon him would fall into the dust of humiliation. Such was the prediction which the Lord made concerning this man whom He chose to be the successor of Shebna.

The Burden of Tyre

In chapter 23 is found the burden of Tyre which is the last of the series of oracles against the nations as set forth by Isaiah in this series.

At the time of the prophet Tyre was the mart of the world. It was the commercial center. It dominated not only Phoenicia but also the whole known world. It was the daughter city of Sidon but had outstripped her. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel uttered prophecies concerning the downfall of Tyre. Study carefully Ezekiel, chapters 26-28, in connection with Isaiah, chapter 23.

The prophet saw the ships of Tyre that were trading with Tarshish (England) as they returned to the mother country from one of their long voyages. When they were far away at sea, they heard from ships going westward that Tyre had been overthrown. When they reached Cypress (Kittim), they received confirmation of the reports which they had already heard.

Seeing the city overthrown, the prophet spoke to the merchants of Phoenicia and exhorted them to be still.

He then looked out over the great Mediterranean Sea and saw the ships of Tyre carrying the abundant harvest of Egypt to various marts of the world.

In verse 4 Sidon, the mother city of Tyre, was told to be ashamed, for her daughter, insular Tyre, the stronghold of the sea, had not borne any real sons and daughters—colonies. The Phoenicians as we know were a great maritime people and colonized many places around the Mediterranean. Carthage, for instance, was a daughter of Phoenicia. But according to this verse Tyre had done no colonizing but had engaged exclusively in commerce with those who had been colonized by other Phoenician cities. When the report of the overthrow of Tyre reached Egypt, the inhabitants wailed because they realized that there was no market for their produce.

The prophet asked: "Who hath purposed this against Tyre?"—the overthrow of the city. Then he answered his own question in the following verse, "Jehovah of hosts hath purposed it" (vs. 9) because of the pride of this great maritime power.

In verse 10 he looked over to Tarshish (England) and urged the people of that country to go through their land and pursue their own life for they were no longer dependent upon Tyre—since it would at that time have been overthrown.

In verse 11 the prophet spoke of God's stretching out His hand over the kingdoms with which Tyre had commercial relations and His having destroyed them. It is obvious that Isaiah was speaking here in terms of Moses' stretching out his hand over Egypt and his bringing God's judgments upon the oppressors of Israel. Tyre was to go down into ignominy and shame and never to rise again—never to occupy the position which she had formerly.

The message of verse 13 is most difficult. Various interpretations have been placed upon this passage. In view of the controversy about it and in view of the fact that our space is so very limited, I must pass by it without any comment and advise the reader to consult some good commentary.

The sailors of the Tyrean ships were urged to howl because their mother city was laid waste. Tyre was to lie in ruins for seventy years according to verse 15. When were those seventy years? The best scholars are of the opinion that they coincide with the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews and that the destruction here foretold to be followed by this period of seventy years was that which was wrought by the Babylonians. Others think that the Assyrians were the instruments chosen of God to accomplish the work. In view of the scanty material which we have, it is impossible for us to say.

After the seventy years the people of Tyre were to sing the song of the harlot which is set forth in verse 16; "Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered." At the end of this seventy-year period the Lord promised to restore Tyre so that she might resume her commercial relationship with the kingdoms of the world as she had done prior to that time. Finally, however, she will turn to God, according to verse 18, and all of her merchandise will become holy unto the Lord. This is in perfect keeping with Psalm 45:13.

Our prophet therefore, after foretelling the restoration of Tyre following her seventy years of desolation, leaped forward into the future and saw Tyre converted to King Messiah and her territory incorporated into His great and glorious kingdom, serving Him and giving glory to God.

There seems to be a future for the people of most nations except those of Edom and Babylon. Great and marvelous things lie out before those of all nations who accept the Lord Jesus Christ and His authority.

THE LITTLE APOCALYPSE

(Chapters 24:1-27:13)

THE TRIBULATION AND THE MILLENNIUM

Chapters 24 and 25

In our last study we reached the end of the oracles concerning the nations, which are found in chapters 13-23. In chapters 24:1-27:13 we have what is known as "The Little Apocalypse" of Isaiah. This section is a fitting sequel to the burdens concerning the nations. As the name implies, the contents of this portion of the book pertains to the great Tribulation and the judgments which will fall upon the earth at that time and the introduction of the great millennial kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the present study I shall discuss chapters 24 and 25; in the next installment chapters 26 and 27 will be considered. At various points in these chapters we read of the destruction of "the city," which is undoubtedly the metropolis and which will be probably either Babylon or Rome. Both of these cities will be standing in the end-time. In fact there will be three great world capitals: Jerusalem, the religious center; Rome, the political center; and Babylon, the financial and commercial center.

The message of Isaiah, chapter 24, is expanded in Revelation 6:1—20:10. The chapter in Isaiah is therefore the abridged form of this section of Revelation.

As we shall see, Isaiah 24:1-20 deals with the Tribulation Period. In this connection let me say that the church of Jesus Christ will not be upon the earth when the judgments described in this passage fall upon it. The New Testament teaches that the rapture of the church occurs before the Tribulation. This fact is seen by a study of I Thessalonians 4:13—5:11. God has not appointed His people unto wrath but rather unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ—salvation or deliverance from the judgments of the Tribulation.

The first verse of Isaiah, chapter 24, speaks about God's utterly destroying the earth, making it waste, and turning it upside down. This passage has been considered as a statement relative to the calamity which befell the earth mentioned in Genesis 1:2. But the facts of this context show that the prophet was not speaking of past events but was looking out into the future.

Another view of the situation presented in this verse is found in Jeremiah 4:23-26, which passage see. This statement has in turn been interpreted as a reference to the primitive disaster which overtook the earth. The reason assigned for thus interpreting this passage is that in it and in Genesis 1:2 the words "waste and void" appear. The use of a word or phrase in two passages does not prove that these statements are necessarily discussing the same event. One must examine all the facts of each context to determine what is the subject of consideration. When one looks at verse 27, which is introduced by the conjunction "for," one will see that the following verses are speaking of the Tribulation Period, which is yet in the future. Since Jeremiah 4:27-31 is thus explanatory of verses 23-26, we cannot avoid the conclusion that this passage too is a prediction concerning the desolation that will be wrought during the Tribulation. Inasmuch as this passage is such a vital one, I ask my reader to turn to the Scriptures and meditate upon it for himself.

According to Isaiah 24:2-4 the people who will be living upon the earth at that time will all fare alike. There will be no distinctions so far as these judgments are concerned. At the present time in our social order there are differences recognized and exemptions made with reference to various ones. Favors are granted to some because of certain conditions; but, when the judgments of God fall upon the earth, they will come alike upon all. The prophet therefore said "... it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; etc." The reason why these judgments fall upon all is that they are all found guilty before God and are not worthy

to be exempted. This general statement covers the case; but, as we shall presently see, there is one exception to this rule. But the exception proves the rule. The earth, at the time of the Tribulation, is compared to people in great distress, who are mourning. It is likewise compared to a flower that fades away. Great and far-reaching will be the effects of these judgments.

The reason for God's pouring out His wrath upon the world is expressed in verses 5 and 6. From verse 5 we see that the earth will be "polluted under the inhabitants thereof." Violation of the laws will be the order of the day. The everlasting covenant will have been broken. Because of the moral and spiritual conditions of the world, the curse of God will go forth throughout the earth and will consume them. The conclusion to which the prophet is brought is expressed in the following words: "... therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left" (vs. 6). This language is to be taken literally, for there is nothing in the context to indicate otherwise. This passage is parallel to the one found in chapter 13:11-13.

When one reads Isaiah 24:5,6 in the light of New Testament passages dealing with conditions that will prevail in the closing days of this age, one cannot accept the theory that there will be a revival which will sweep the earth then. On the contrary the population of the world will be on the toboggan slide going downward to the very depths of sin and degradation. There may be a local turning to God here and there, but the Word does not hold out any promise that there will be a world-wide revival in the closing days of this age. This is a most important point for us to consider, because our view regarding it will determine our programs, especially our actions and the direction of our labors for the Master. God has revealed to us the conditions which will prevail in the end of this age in order that we might co-operate with Him intelligently.

In verses 7-13 we have a very vivid picture of the situation which will prevail throughout the world during the first part of the Tribulation. Normal conditions will be a thing of the past. People who are in the habit of visiting night clubs and places of such resort will no longer attend them. Those who go to places where they dine and dance, drink and carouse, will no longer frequent them. Amusement places and show houses, theaters and operas, will all be closed, because there will be no one who desires to patronize them. Everything will be abnormal. Those who have been accustomed to strong drink will push it from them, because it will be bitter to them. The waste city will be broken down, the houses will be shut up, and will be forsaken. The mirth of the land will be gone. Such is the description found in verses 7-12. Then in verse 13 the prophet declares that the conditions which will prevail in Palestine at that time will be universal throughout the earth, among all peoples: "For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done."

Though there is to be no revival in the concluding days of this age, prior to the rapture, there is to be the greatest turning to God of all the centuries, which will take place in the first part of the Tribulation. A prediction concerning it is found in verses 14-16a:

14 These shall lift up their voice, they shall shout; for the majesty of Jehovah they cry aloud from the sea. 15 Wherefore glorify ye Jehovah in the east, even the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the isles of the sea. 16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs: Glory to the righteous.

In contrast with the sorrow and distress that will grip the peoples of the world, as we have just seen in verses 7-13, will be the joy and the hilarious worship of God by another group of whom we have read in the passage just quoted. Note what is said: "These shall lift up their voice, they shall shout; for the majesty of Jehovah they cry aloud from the sea." The ones who are here seen are indeed rejoicing in God, because of His majesty and glory. There is no echo of sadness nor wailing in their shoutings.

The prophet who was in Jerusalem looked toward the Mediterranean and declared that he saw this mighty revival in some country west of Palestine. He does not use the actual word "west" but employs the expression, "from the sea,"

which was west of Palestine. Though we may not be dogmatic in any assertion without positive proof, I am of the strong conviction—knowing the spiritual conditions in Southern Europe which is west of Palestine and those in America—that the prophet saw a mighty awakening here in America where the gospel is being proclaimed and is known as in no other country on the face of the globe—unless it be in England. A glance at the world map confirms this interpretation.

From the place west of Palestine this revival will spread to the Holy Land and, as we see in verse 15, will fan out from there to the four corners of the globe. Then, in verse 16a, we see that there will be songs ascending to God, the content of which is expressed in the following words: "Glory to the righteous." When these verses are allowed to give their message, one can see nothing but a world-wide revival which far surpasses all former spiritual awakenings. This prediction is in perfect harmony with the one which appears in Isaiah 26:9 and which declares that, when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants thereof learn righteousness. It is also in perfect accord with the teachings of Revelation, chapter 7, which shows a mighty turning to God in the first part of the Tribulation. Then, and only then, can we scripturally look for a world-wide revival. The preaching which will produce it will be done by the Jewish servants of God mentioned in Revelation, chapter 7.

A study of the Book of Revelation shows that this mighty turning to God will occur during the first half of the Tribulation, but it will be brought to a close, outwardly at least, in the middle of it when the Antichrist opposes all religion and demands that he alone be worshipped as God. Notwithstanding the imperial decrees of that future time, the work will go on, doubtless under cover; for the everlasting gospel will be proclaimed, even during the latter half of the Tribulation. Truly then, in a special way, the blood of the martyrs will be the seed of the kingdom.

In verse 16b the prophet sighs and expresses a woe because "the treacherous have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous have dealt very treacherously." When one recognizes that Isaiah, chapter 24, is the abridged form of Revelation 6:1-20:10, and when one compares this brief outline with the full details as given in the Book of Revelation, one comes to the conclusion that this "treacherous one," or ones of whom the prophet here speaks, can be none other than the Antichrist and his lieutenants who, in the middle of the Tribulation ban all religion and demand that everyone worship him.

The occurrences of the latter half of the Tribulation are set forth in Revelation, chapter 16, under the symbolism of the pouring out of the bowls of the wrath of God upon the earth; but the effects of the pouring out of His indignation is interpreted literally. When we study this chapter, we see that there will be great physical changes that will take place upon the earth, and also in the heavens. These phenomena are described in Isaiah 24:17-20. The windows on high at that time will be opened and the foundations of the earth will tremble. The earth will be utterly broken and will be rent asunder. It will be shaken violently. The movements of the earth, which now are with utmost precision will at that time be so very irregular and erratic that they are compared to the stumbling, staggering movements of a drunken man and to the swaying of a hammock. The reality of the description here given becomes apparent to the one who studies this passage in connection with our Lord's prediction found in Matthew 24:29-31. At that time the sun will be darkened, the stars will fall from the heavens, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Such commotion throughout the realm of nature will materially affect the earth and its movement in its orbit.

At that time, according to verse 20, the civilization which will be steeped in sin and transgression will fall. The present order will pass away and a different one will arise in its place.

At the conclusion of the Tribulation Jehovah of hosts will punish the hosts of the high ones on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth. Who are these hosts? They can be none other than Satan and the evil spirits under him who are in rebellion against God. They will at that time be punished and will be gathered together, with the kings of the earth, as prisoners are gathered and will be shut up in the pit of the abyss, where they will be for many days. When these verses

are read along with Revelation 20:1-5, one will see that John, in the latter passage, was talking about the same ones whom Isaiah the prophet mentioned. Thus Satan and his hosts of evil spirits will be incarcerated in the pit of the abyss where they will remain for the "many days" of this passage, which we know, from the Revelation passage, will be a thousand years. This identification becomes apparent to the one who is willing to take the Word of God at its face value.

The expression, "one thousand years," means exactly what it says. There is nothing in the context to indicate a departure from the ordinary meaning of these words.

At the conclusion of this period of one thousand years, Satan and those of his cohorts who have been incarcerated with him during the Millennial Age will be visited and punished, for the original word in the Hebrew translated "visit" also means "punish."

The Millennium

At the conclusion of the Tribulation the Lord Jesus Christ will come back to this earth and will set up His kingdom. He will not return, however, until the Jews acknowledge their national sin of rejecting Him and plead with Him to return. This truth is seen in such passages as Hosea 5:15-6:3 and Matthew 23:37-39. When He reappears, He will lift the curse from the earth and restore conditions similar to those which prevailed in Eden. A hint of this is found in Isaiah 51:1-3.

In the last verse of chapter 24 the moon, it is said, will be confounded and the sun put to shame. The reason for this phenomenon is that Jehovah of hosts with His glory and majesty will eclipse the brilliancy of the heavenly bodies—even though at that time the light of the moon will be as that of the sun and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold what it is today (Isa. 30:26). For a glowing picture of the earth as it will appear during the peaceful reign of our Lord, see such passages as Isaiah 2:1-4 and 4:2-6. There are many other references to the condition of the earth at that time found throughout the Scriptures, but these will suffice for the present.

Some Outstanding Predictions

As we have just seen, Isaiah, chapter 24, covers the Tribulation, the return of our Lord, and His glorious millennial reign. The picture is clear. The facts are unmistakable—for the one who really believes God and His Word and who is willing to allow the Scriptures to deliver their own message to his heart.

In the rest of this section of the Book of Isaiah (chaps. 26, 27) the prophet being governed by the "law of recurrence," elaborated on certain outstanding facts concerning the events of the end-time. In his doing this, he was like the artist who blocks out his picture at the very beginning of his task of painting a portrait and later touches up the features here and there to bring out the true character of the person who is posing. After giving the predictions of chapter 24, the prophet goes back and describes certain outstanding events in connection with the Tribulation and the introduction of the Millennial Age. The outcome of the Tribulation will be so very glorious that these chapters are interspersed with three short songs and an extended one. They are found in 25:1; 25:9; 26:1-19; and 27:2-6.

The contents of the first of these hymns is praise to God because of His having performed wonderful things in faithfulness and in truth, which things He has purposed of old. There is a plan of the ages which is referred to in Ephesians 3:11. The Lord works all things according to the purpose of His will (Eph. 1:11). All things which He accomplishes are done in righteousness and in accordance with the standards of truth.

The first thing which the prophet mentioned in this connection is the destruction of the city. He makes it a heap, he turns the fortified city into a ruin and the palace of strangers to be no city. This is never to be rebuilt. This language seems to point to Babylon, the outstanding world-city. There world dominion began; there human history will end. That Babylon

will be rebuilt is certain from a careful study of Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14; Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51; and Revelation, chapter 18. The complete destruction and overthrow of Babylon which is foretold in these scriptures has never been accomplished. Since the Word of God cannot fail, we know that Babylon will be rebuilt and will be destroyed as there foretold.

When this world-city is thus destroyed, there will arise another world-city in the Millennium. It will be a "city of terrible nations," which will worship God and glorify Him. It will be indeed a metropolis and all its people will be worshippers of the one true and living God.

The second fact which the prophet wished to emphasize is the deliverance of the poor and needy of Israel at the Lord's return. This is found in verse 4. Whenever the two expressions, "poor and needy," appear together in the writings of the psalms and the prophets, they always refer to Israel, downtrodden and oppressed. Thus, according to Isaiah 25:4, God will deliver oppressed Israel at the proper time and will bring down the noise of her opponents as the heat settles to earth (vs. 5).

The third thing which he wished to emphasize is mentioned in verse 6. It is the fact that God has wonderful things in store for those who wait for Him. He therefore declared that "... in this mountain will Jehovah of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." The mountain referred to can be none other than Jerusalem. The great and marvelous things which God has in store for those who accept Him are compared to a feast of fat things and the very best of wines, together with the marrow—the choicest of delicacies. It will be Jerusalem where our Lord will be and from which He will dispense His blessings to the nations of the world. When the Lord Jesus returns, He will lift the curse and will create the heavens above anew and the earth beneath anew. This newly created material will cover up all of the debris caused by the wrecking of the earth during the Tribulation. This fact is seen by a study of Isaiah 65:17 in the light of its immediate context. In view of this fact we can see why it is that the prophet laid emphasis upon the great things which God has in store for all the peoples of this earth at that future time.

The fourth item which Isaiah desired to mention here is the destruction of "the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations." This prediction is found in verse 7. What is meant by this covering or veil which is spread over the peoples of earth and which Jehovah will destroy in that mountain, Jerusalem? We immediately realize that the prophet was not talking about a literal covering; it therefore must be a spiritual one. What covering can this be? The answer is doubtless given in II Corinthians 4:3,4: "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn *upon them*." That portion of the veil which covers Israel is referred to in Isaiah 29:9-12. As we have already seen, the judgments of the Tribulation will bring the bulk of the people of the earth to a realization of their helpless condition. Many of them will turn to God. The wicked will be purged by those judgments from the earth. When the Lord Jesus Christ returns, He will bind Satan and all of his cohorts in the pit of the abyss and will lift this veil which blinds the eyes of the people; thus, in that mountain—Jerusalem—will this great miracle be wrought.

The fifth item mentioned is the abolition of death. The prophet declared:

8 He hath swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it.

Longevity will be restored to the people of earth. The reaper, Death, will no longer go to and fro throughout the earth taking his toll as he has done through the centuries. There is only one exception to this general rule. It is stated in Isaiah 65:20. God never forces the will of any man. He allows all to make their own free choices. He will observe this principal in the Millennial Age. During that time people will be born. The human family will increase most rapidly because there will

be no more babies dying in infancy. The gospel will be preached in that time. The bulk of the people will accept the Lord Jesus and will be regenerated and saved. But there will be certain ones who will neglect or refuse to accept the Lord. They will be allowed to remain upon the earth until they reach their one hundredth birthday. If they have not by that time accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour and been saved, the curse of God will strike them down, for "the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed."

The sixth fact mentioned in this chapter is the personal appearance of the Lord. This prediction is set forth in verse 9, which comprises the second of the songs referred to above.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

When man was expelled from the Garden of Eden, God promised that the Messiah would come and deal a deathblow to the serpent. At different times He added details to this promise. Men therefore were expecting Jehovah to appear upon earth and to accomplish their deliverance. This has been the hope of the godly throughout the centuries. In Psalm 27:13,14, David declared :

13 *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah In the land of the living. 14 Wait for Jehovah: Be strong, and let thy heart take courage; Yea, wait thou for Jehovah.

The expression, "the goodness of Jehovah," is a term that was used to refer to the personal appearance of Jehovah himself. This passage therefore means that the expectation of Jehovah's appearing upon earth as man's deliverer was the hope which animated David and sustained him during his checkered career. Hezekiah had this hope. When the Lord commanded him to set his house in order, for he was to die, the king bewailed his condition and declared:

11 I said, I shall not see Jehovah, *even* Jehovah in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world (Isa. 38:11).

This statement shows that the king was looking forward to Jehovah's appearing and was hoping that He would appear in his life time. This same expectation is echoed in various other places in the Scriptures. The prophets urged Israel to serve the Lord and to wait patiently for Jehovah. When therefore we see such exhortations as this, we may be certain that it is a reference to the personal appearance of Jehovah here upon earth.

In Isaiah 25:9, which we have quoted above, there is a vision of Jehovah after He has come to the earth. Here we see converted Israel beholding Him and rejoicing in His salvation.

The seventh and last thing mentioned in chapter 25 is the destruction of Moab, an inveterate enemy of Israel. This prediction is found in verses 10-12. Moab sought every occasion to do harm to the Chosen People. Many wars raged between them. The complete subjugation of this enemy is represented as its being trodden down in its place "even as straw is trodden down in the water of the dunghill." All of its fortifications and means of waging war are said to be destroyed.

From other passages we know that all Israel's enemies will be destroyed. The prophet mentioned this one however because of the inveterate hatred which the Moabites bore toward Israel. Thus converted Israel will be delivered from all her foes and will become the head of the nations—instead of being the tail as she is at the present time (Deut. 28:13). Great and wonderful things await converted Israel and those who know and who love the Lord's appearing.

THE LITTLE APOCALYPSE

Chapters 24:1-27:13

ISRAEL'S SONG OF HOPE; SONG OF THE VINEYARD; CHASTENED AND RESTORED TO FELLOWSHIP

Chapters 26 and 27

In the present installment of this series we are to study Isaiah, chapters 26 and 27, which with chapters 24 and 25 constitute "the little apocalypse" of the Book of Isaiah. Chapters 26 and 27 fall into three natural divisions: (A) Israel's song of hope during the Tribulation (26:1-27:1); (B) The song of the vineyard (27:2-6); and, (C) Israel chastened and restored to fellowship with Jehovah (27:7-13).

Israel's Song of Hope During the Tribulation (26:1-27:1).

At the present time Israel has her national anthem which expresses the hope of Zionism. In 1937 when I was driving through the Plains of Jezreel, I heard, late in the afternoon, the Jews singing this national anthem as they were returning from the fields to their colonies. This song grips the Jewish mind, especially the Zionist.

But at the time foreseen by Isaiah, the majority of the Jews in Palestine will be singing a different song. This will be the one contained in Isaiah 26:1-19. Verses 20 and 21, with 27:1, constitute the concluding remarks with regard to that song and the situation which will at that time exist.

The prophecy begins with this statement: "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah." The expression, "in that day," either refers to a definite day that is mentioned in the connection, to the time of the Tribulation, or to the Millennium. The facts of the context determine its special significance in a given case. In this instance the context shows that the prophet was talking of the time of Jacob's trouble, the Tribulation. At that time this song, consisting of verses 26:1-19, will be sung throughout the land of Judah.

In chapters 24 and 25 we have seen predictions regarding the destruction of the world city of the end-time and a forecast of the judgments that will fall upon the entire earth and its inhabitants because of sin and iniquity. In contrast with the overthrow of the world government and its civilization, the Jews during the Tribulation in Palestine will by faith look forward to the city which Abraham in vision saw when he was called to leave his homeland and to go to the country which God promised to give him. Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad. He was seeking for that city which has foundations whose maker and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-16). The Jerusalem of the Tribulation will be standing at the time here foreseen, but the remnant of Israel that will be searching for truth will by faith see the millennial Jerusalem rise out of the dust of the ashes of the Tribulation, being created anew, the joy and rejoicing of the whole earth (Isa. 62:7). They will realize that God is the one who protects and delivers them. Thus they will say that this strong city is theirs and that God will appoint salvation as walls and bulwarks. What walls and bulwarks did for soldiers in ancient warfare, Jehovah with His salvation will do for the faithful in Israel.

In verse 2 this remnant is represented as marching to the millennial Jerusalem and shouting to its keepers to open the gates in order that they, "the righteous nation which keepeth faith," may enter in. In the imagery of this verse, this newly-created city is standing unoccupied. Those of the remnant, like a mighty army marching toward it, are the ones who have kept the faith—the faith of their fathers—and are trusting in God. The same representation appears in Psalm 118, which gives us a pageant, as it were, depicting the return of Israel to her God. (See especially verses 19-22 of this psalm.) Isaiah 26:2 presupposes that Israel will have, at this time, been evangelized and been given the truth. The remnant is therefore represented as marching literally to Zion, their mother city, and to their Messiah for whom they have been

longing for centuries. That Israel will have been evangelized prior to the time here foreseen is evident from many passages of the Scripture.

According to Isaiah 26:3 God will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are stayed upon Him, the reason being that such a one believes in Him. He will give stability to the trusting heart. He who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek after Him. Faith, however, always comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom. 10:16).

According to verse 4 this future remnant of Israel is urged to trust in Jehovah continuously, for it is He who is the rock of ages. When we study this verse in the light of parallel passages, we know that this one can be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Hebrew Messiah.

The exhortation of verse 4 to trust in Jehovah is reinforced and buttressed by the prediction of verse 5, which foresees by faith the destruction of the world city. This metropolis, I understand, will probably be Babylon rebuilt or the Rome of the end-time. This overthrow, to a certain extent at least, will be due to the efforts of the poor and needy of verse 6, which terms usually refer in the psalms and in the prophetic word to the remnant of Israel. When we view this prophecy in the light of others, we know that God will use this faithful remnant in accomplishing His purpose. For further study on this point see Isaiah 41:14,15 and Micah 4:12,13.

In verse 7 is a wonderful promise. The way over which the just travel is one characterized by uprightness. God, who is upright and just, will direct the paths of the just. According to Proverbs 4:18 the "path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" of the great Millennial Age.

In verses 8 to 10 the prophet discussed briefly world conditions during the Tribulation. Here he spoke of Israel during that time of Jacob's trouble and the effect that the judgments of wrath will have upon her. In connection with this prediction we likewise see the results of the Tribulation upon the world in general. For instance, in verse 8 the prophet saw the faithful walking in the path of the judgments of the Tribulation and waiting expectantly for the personal appearance of Jehovah for their rescue. This one is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns. The sentiment uppermost in their hearts at that time will be "to thy name, even to thy memorial *name*, is the desire of our soul." Their longing for His appearance will be so very intense that it will be the meditation of their heart both day and night. It will not be a cold, formal, orthodox faith which they will hold; but it will be a vivid reality to them, for each of them will say, "Yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee earnestly." Usually man's extremity is God's opportunity. When God thus brings His judgments upon Israel, she will do, as she has always done on former occasions—turn to the messianic hope for consolation and deliverance.

According to the last clause of verse 9, when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. From a careful study of Revelation, chapters 6-19, we learn that the judgments of the Tribulation Period will be most intense and severe. Most of them will be world-wide in their scope. Men will be brought to their extremity. Conditions will be such that it will be evident to everyone who is even in the least fair and honest that God is the supreme ruler of the universe and that only in Him can there be any salvation. I realize from studying the prophecies relating to that time that many people will be hardened instead of softened by the judgments of that time. But all, except such hardened ones, will be brought to their extremity and untold multitudes will turn to God. A picture of this world-wide revival which will come at that time is seen in Revelation, chapter 7. A perusal of this passage shows that the evangelists who will proclaim the message of salvation then will be 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel. They will be sealed and protected from the judgments of that time and will go forth in the power of the Spirit of God, proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ to every nation, tribe, tongue, and language. As a result of their preaching there will arise an innumerable host of people, which no one can number, out of all the nations of the world. John declared that

these will have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb and that they will come out of the Tribulation. Other passages tell of this mighty awakening which will occur at that time. According to the prophetic word this age is to end in apostasy and catastrophe. There is no scriptural promise held out to us that we may expect any great turning to God now. On the contrary, the sure word of prophecy affirms that conditions will continue to grow worse and worse until God will be forced to pour out His judgments on the world. There is not, therefore, any scriptural promise, so far as I have been able to discover in the Word, upon which we can build our hopes for a general awakening of any proportion at the present time. Only in the Tribulation, when God's judgments are in the world, will there come this heaven-sent revival.

As we have time and opportunity, let us in the power of the Spirit of God give the message of salvation to all Israel in order to prepare the 144,000 to deliver the message of salvation which they will proclaim during the first part of the Tribulation. Let us preach the gospel with all zest now to both Jew and Gentile in order to give as many as possible an opportunity of receiving Christ.

God will purge the unrighteousness out of the earth, according to verse 10; because in the "land of uprightness"—the millennial world—the wicked would continue to practice unrighteousness.

In verse 11 the prophet represented Jehovah as having lifted high His hand during the Tribulation. Though it is exalted and is in action, yet the people of the world do not see it; only those who have eyes to see are the ones who observe His activity. God is working at all times. He is overruling all affairs, yet only the spiritually-minded people can recognize His unseen hand in human affairs. Although the majority of the people of the world in the time of the Tribulation will be hardened and will be unable to see and recognize His presence in the judgments falling upon them, the prophet declared that they shall see His zeal for His ancient people and be put to shame. They shall see it when He appears in all His glory as their great Deliverer. This will come in the form of the personal, bodily return to earth of Messiah in answer to the cry of the faithful remnant for Him to deliver them.

God has a plan and purpose. Israel is in the center of that plan. He will, according to verse 12, ordain peace for her and will accomplish all her works for her.

God instituted a theocracy in Israel when He brought her out of the land of Egypt. He said that He would be her King. Nevertheless in the days of Samuel the people clamored for a king in order that they might be like the nations about them. In doing so, they rejected God. He acceded to their demand and gave them Saul. He had however, to turn His beloved people over to the authority of the Gentile nations who acted in many instances as tyrants. Thus, according to verse 13, the penitent remnant of the Tribulation Period will declare that other lords besides Jehovah have exercised dominion over them but under no conditions will they acknowledge any name except that of Jehovah their God.

By faith the remnant of Israel of the end-time will look forward to the end of the Tribulation when all their enemies and their cruel lords will have been slain and they will have been delivered. Moreover they look forward to the time, when under the benign and righteous rule of King Messiah, the nation is increased and God is being glorified through His people. The promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) will then for the first time be fully realized. At that time Israel will inherit the Land of Promise, which includes all the territory from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates. That fact is mentioned in verse 15.

The prophet described the broken, penitential spirit of the faithful remnant and informed us that they will turn to God in genuine repentance under the chastening strokes of His rod. He thus foretold that they will pray thus: "Jehovah, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." Moreover they will admit (vss. 17,18) that they have not accomplished the purposes which God had in view for them in His creating the nation and in His depositing with them His revelation. Instead of accomplishing the work and the mission assigned by Him, the faithful

remnant will make the sad confession that they have wrought no "deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the earth fallen."

Through the dark clouds of verses 16-18, the faith of the prophet and of the faithful remnant penetrates to the realities beyond and sees the great resurrection of the just. In verse 19 therefore Isaiah declared: "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise." God assures the remnant that their loved ones who know Him and who have died will live again. Then, with a bold venture of faith, he spoke of the bodies of the faithful who have fallen as "my dead bodies." This verse is a clear prediction concerning the resurrection of the righteous. Although not very much is said in the Old Testament concerning the resurrection, there are a few prophecies dealing with this subject. For instance, Daniel 12:1f gives us a prediction concerning the resurrection. In Ezekiel, chapter 37, is a promise of the national resurrection of Israel presented under the symbolism of the dry bones in the valley. Although this prediction is a symbolic representation, yet, when it is read in the light of parallel scriptures, it becomes evident that the prophet probably also saw the literal rising of the righteous dead.

Following the statement in verse 19 is the prophet's address to the righteous dead: "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead." From the context we are certain that this prophecy refers to the righteous in Israel who are dead.

Let us recognize the fact that there two resurrections—one which precedes the Millennial Age and one which follows it. The righteous are raised before the thousand years' reign of our Lord; but the unrighteous never come to life until after the thousand years are finished. Some have thought, however, that the passage in John 5:28,29 proves a general resurrection. The words cited as evidence are these: "For the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, 29 and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." There is no contradiction between our Lord's language in this passage and that of John in Revelation, chapter 20. John says that one thousand years intervene between the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust. The word "hour" which Jesus used, though it may refer to a period of sixty minutes, has various connotations. For example, in John 4:23, our Lord said: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth." Certainly "hour" in this passage does not mean sixty minutes, but connotes the entire Christian Dispensation. Since our Lord used the term with this meaning and since there is no contradiction between His statement and that of the Apostle John, we are to understand that the word "hour" in John 5:28,29 is a long period of time and that His teaching agrees with that of John. So there are two resurrections: one of the righteous before the thousand years of our Lord's literal reign and one of the unrighteous after the thousand years.

Following the song which will be sung in the land of Judah in the Tribulation by the faithful remnant, as we have seen, is the prophet's invitation, which is indeed a prediction, for the faithful remnant of Jews to enter into a place of safety in order that they might be preserved during that time of judgment. Thus the prophet declared, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." A reading of the latter part of Daniel, chapter 11, seems to indicate that the faithful remnant of Israel will flee from Palestine into the territory east of the Jordan, consisting of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, where they will be protected. The same theme is touched upon in Revelation, chapter 12, where the woman, clad in the sun, and standing on the moon with twelve stars in her crown, flees to a wilderness, to a place prepared for her by the Lord. The facts of the context of this latter passage show that this woman is the remnant of Israel which flees to a specially prepared place in order that she might be preserved during the time of the indignation.

Jehovah at that time will punish the inhabitants of the world for their wickedness and the earth "shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Then every sin and transgression shall receive a just recompense of reward.

"In that day Jehovah with his hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea" (Isa. 27:1). What is meant by leviathan and the monster? An examination of this verse and a comparison of it with verse 13 of this chapter leads one, in the light of parallel passages, to conclude that possibly Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria are here represented under the symbolism of leviathan the swift serpent, leviathan the crooked serpent, and the monster in the sea. (On account of limited space I cannot give the reasons for these conclusions. One who is interested should consult some good commentary.) Although these three world powers were probably symbolized by the monster and the two leviathans, it is also quite likely that Isaiah saw behind these civil governments Satan and his cohorts who are backing up and sponsoring world authorities in opposition to the great kingdom of God. The force of this interpretation may be seen by an examination of Job, chapters 40 and 41, where the facts of each context make clear that the writer was not talking about literal monsters but was speaking of Satan under the symbolism of these wild, ferocious beasts. At the end of the Tribulation the Lord will have destroyed all human governments and will have incarcerated Satan and all the host of the high ones on high in the pit of the abyss where they shall remain throughout the righteous reign of our Lord.

The Song of the Vineyard (27:2-6)

In Isaiah 27:2-6 appears the "song of the vineyard." This song is related to Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:8-15; and Matthew 21:33-46. In each of these passages God compares Israel to a vineyard which He has planted and which He owns. All these references, except our present passage, deal with Israel as God's vineyard which has borne the wild bitter grapes of injustice and unrighteousness. But in the verses which we are to consider, Israel is represented as a vineyard which God, the true husbandman and owner, will tend, protect, and keep, and which will eventually yield a harvest, filling "the face of the world with fruit." The prophet urged his hearers to sing concerning this vineyard. The theme is indeed a worthy one. Israel is the nation of destiny. God will yet use her in the future as He has never done in the past.

But the thing about which the prophet wanted his hearers to sing is the fact that Jehovah is its keeper. God is the only one who can keep Israel. The Shepherd of Israel, the Hebrew Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ—is the one who has been guiding her through her checkered history during the centuries; but He will especially exercise protective and preserving power over her during the time of the Tribulation. The promise that He will provide for her is stated in the following words: "I will water it every moment." God always provides those things that are necessary for the well-being of any of His children. Since this is the remnant of Israel that is in view, the promise involves providing those things that will be necessary for the spiritual development and welfare of these people. Moreover, He will protect His vineyard from all harm. This promise is expressed in the words, "... lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." If the Almighty did not protect Israel during the Tribulation, the Antichrist, backed by Satan, would exterminate her. According to Isaiah 27:4 God states that wrath is not in Him. Of course the chastisement which He brings upon her will be due to His indignation at sin, but because of His great love for her the statement that wrath is not in Him is correct. Then the briers and thorns are challenged to enter a pitched battle with Him. Of course thorns and briers are here personified. Should they do this, He declared, "I would march upon them, I would burn them together." According to verse 5 the Lord gives an invitation to one and all to come and make their peace with Him and enter into fellowship with Him: "Or else let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; *yea*, let him make peace with me." This is indeed a great invitation.

But the song reaches its highest point in verse 6: "In days to come shall Jacob take root; Israel shall blossom and bud; and they shall fill the face of the world with fruit." Israel is to be the channel of world blessing in the great Millennial Age. She will be the head of the nations instead of being the tail as she is at the present time. When Israel is thus restored to fellowship with God, His blessing and favor will flow out through her to all nations and they will all be brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Thus the world will be filled with spiritual fruit at that time.

Israel Chastened and Restored to Fellowship (27:7-13)

In Isaiah 27:7-13 we have a prediction that God will chasten Israel but will finally restore her to fellowship with Himself. In verse 7 the prophet contrasted the way in which God deals with Israel with the way in which He deals with her bitter enemies. Thus he asks: "Hath he [Jehovah] smitten them [Israel] as he smote those that smote them? or are they slain according to the slaughter of them that were slain by them?" The nations in their dealings with Israel have been ruthless and merciless. God deals with them according to the principles of righteousness and justice. To the merciful He will show Himself merciful, but to the perverse He will show Himself froward (Ps. 18:25,26). Thus his dealings with the nations, the enemies of Israel, will be more severe, from one point of view, than His treatment of His own people.

The Lord has promised that He will make an end of all the nations but will not make an end of Israel. He will, however, punish her in measure. Jeremiah asserted this fact later (Jer. 30:11), but Isaiah mentioned it in verse 8. He therefore declared, "In measure, when thou sendest them away, thou dost contend with them; he hath removed *them* with his rough blast in the day of the east wind." When God chastened Israel, cast her out of her own land, and scattered her among the nations, He did it in a measure, or literally, in a large measure. But He did not send her away forever or cast her off finally. The blow which dispersed her among the nations was indeed a severe one—like the rough blast of the day of the east wind.

Israel is yet to be forgiven and to be brought back into fellowship with God. This fact is asserted in verse 9: "Therefore by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be forgiven, and this is all the fruit of taking away his sin: that he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, so that the Asherim and the sun images shall rise no more." One must read this passage in the light of other scriptures which affirm that men are forgiven their sins by the pure, sovereign grace of God, when they take hold of Him by faith. This passage looks at the repentant spirit of Israel in its outworking. Her contrition of heart will be so very genuine and deep that she will destroy every vestige of heathenism as indicated by this verse. Thus her repentance is spoken of in terms of its outworkings.

The prophet sees the country of Palestine in a waste, desolate, and barren condition—the evidence of God's displeasure against the people for their sins. Sin and iniquity demand punishment—even though the sinner is forgiven. David sinned. The Lord forgave him when he repented, yet He punished Him. (See II Sam. chapter 12.) That is the way it will be with Israel.

In verse 12 is a marvelous promise that the Lord will gather His own from the ranks of Israel and re-establish them in their own land. Thus we read:

12 And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will beat off *his fruit* from the flood of the River unto the brook of Egypt; and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.

In this passage Isaiah compared Israel to fruit trees—probably the olive. The nation is set once again in the land that was promised to Abraham—the country between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates River. Thus in the imagery of the prophet a great portion of Israel is represented as an olive orchard in that section of the world. During the Tribulation the Lord beats off the fruit from the trees and gathers it for Himself. He therefore says, "And ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel." This passage assumes the restoration, at least of an appreciable portion of the Jewish nation, to Palestine and the territory promised to Abraham. An examination of the vision of the valley, of dry bones (Ezekiel, chapter 37) foretells at least a partial regathering of Israel before the great Millennial Age.

The time has come for the Jew to go back to his own land and to settle in that section of the world in order that God may beat off the fruit from His plantation in fulfillment of this prophecy. Let us pray that in the postwar world Israel may have free access to her land and opportunity to go back there in fulfillment of this prediction.

The prophecy concludes with a promise that the Lord will come with a great trumpet and will gather together the remnant of His people which remains from Assyria and from Egypt and will gather them in His holy mountain at Jerusalem to worship Him. In Isaiah, chapter 19, there is a clear prediction that many Jews will be in Egypt in the end of this age and will even have a place of worship there. At the same time they will have their heart in their national capital, Jerusalem. Here we are told that there will be outcasts of Israel in Assyria and that, when the Lord does come, He will gather them back into their own land in order that they might fulfill His plan and purpose through them.

It is the privilege of everyone who believes the Word of God to pray earnestly for the peace of Jerusalem and to hasten by prayer and by labor the coming of the day of God by reason of which the present order will pass out of existence and the new, glorious Millennial Age may be ushered in—when the glory of God will encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea.

THE PROPHECIES CALLED FORTH BY CRISIS OF 14TH YEAR OF HEZEKIAH

THE BOOK OF WOES

Chapters 28-35

Pronouncement of Woes

First Woe — 28:1-29

Second Woe — 29:1-24

Third Woe — 30:1-33

Fourth Woe — 31:1-32:20

Fifth Woe — 33:1-24

Aftermath

World Judgment—34:1-17

Epilogue

World Blessing—35:1-10

In our exposition of the Book of Isaiah we have now come to a new section, chapters 28-35. The oracles contained in this portion of the book were spoken during the reign of King Hezekiah of Jerusalem and reflect the conditions of the first part of his reign—before the fall of Samaria. Chapters 36-39 came out of the events of the fatal fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign and faithfully reflect the conditions of the kingdom from that time to the close. Thus chapters 28-39 echo the situation in Israel during the reign of Hezekiah, as chapters 7-12 (the Book of Immanuel) do in regard to the times of Ahaz, when those early oracles were spoken.

Isaiah, chapters 28-35, has been properly called the "Book of Woes," because each of the oracles, with the exception of chapters 34 and 35, begin with this ominous word. Chapters 28-33 consist of separate oracles directed at Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, Jerusalem, the capital of the southern kingdom, and Nineveh, the royal city of the great Assyrian empire, which was in Isaiah's time threatening the security of Israel. Chapter 34, as we shall learn, deals with the world situation in the end-time and singles out Edom, an inveterate enemy of Israel, as a typical nation upon whom God's judgments will fall. In contrast with these world judgments is the prediction of chapter 35 which deals with the great Kingdom Age when the curse will be lifted and the glory of God will encircle the globe.

In each of these oracles the prophet dealt with the situation which was confronting him and the nation at that time and then blended these predictions with prophecies regarding the world-wide situation of Israel during the final Tribulation from which she will eventually be delivered. We have in these chapters, as we find throughout the prophetic word, applications of the "law of double reference," which enabled the prophet to blend predictions and descriptions of both the immediate and remote situations. A failure to recognize this law of the prophetic word throws the pictures of the prophets out of focus, but a proper understanding and a recognition of this law instantly bring their predictions into sharp focus. Micah, as all Bible students know, was a contemporary of Isaiah's, for his ministry fell in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. A close examination of the Book of Micah reveals the fact that there is reflected in it the same situation which we see in Isaiah, chapters 28-35. One who is eager to get a clear understanding of the situation of these chapters would do well in studying the Book of Micah in connection with our study of this portion of Isaiah.

THE FIRST WOE 28:1-29

The Prediction Concerning Samaria (vss. 1-6)

The prophet began his oracle on this occasion by uttering a prediction concerning Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom. This is found in 28:1-6. Having dealt with that phase of his subject, he turned to Jerusalem and the leaders of the southern kingdom and hurled his invectives against them, because of their sinfulness (vss. 7-13). He then followed this denunciation by a prediction concerning the fate of the southern kingdom, which finally in the end-time will be gloriously delivered. The oracle concludes with a parable drawn from the vegetable kingdom and which sets forth the great truth that God, under His moral government of the universe, must allow nature to take its course (vss. 23-29).

I have visited the ancient site of Samaria on two occasions. If one will think of a wooden nut bowl which has a central cone, one will have a perfect picture of Samaria as it is located in a great valley which surrounds it. This valley is so very nearly perfect and uniform in its encircling the mountain that it almost looks as if it were artificial. The same thing is true with reference to Lachish, which likewise is located in a circular valley.

On the top of the hill of Samaria the city was located. In the valley surrounding it and on the sloping hills constituting the inside of this bowl-shaped valley were vineyards and orchards, together with vegetable gardens, in the days of Isaiah. The correctness of this statement is reflected in the prophet's description of Samaria and its environs.

In Isaiah 28:2-4 is a prediction that there was a mighty and a strong one who would come against Samaria "as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a tempest of mighty waters overflowing." A glance at profane history shows that the one here referred to was none other than Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, with his armed might. This monarch would upon first sight of Samaria do with it as one does when he sees the first ripe fig in the summer—pull it immediately and devour it. When we read the historical account in II Kings, chapters 17 and 18, and glance at the Assyrian monuments, we see that Shalmaneser was the one who started the siege against Samaria and the northern kingdom, but that Sennacherib was the one who actually completed the job. But the prediction is correct in stating that the king of Assyria would grasp this first ripe fig of Samaria and devour it.

In verses 5 and 6 the prophet gave promise that, "In that day will Jehovah of hosts become a crown of glory ... and a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate." The Lord did not become this to Israel when the northern kingdom fell nor to the southern kingdom when it went down under the sledge-hammer blows of the Babylonians. Since the Word of God will be fulfilled literally as God has spoken and since this portion of the prophecy has not been fulfilled, we can come to no other conclusion than that this is a description of the final siege and distress of Israel in the Tribulation, at the close of which God will, when Israel accepts Him and acknowledges her national sin, restore her to her proper place and become a crown of glory to her. Thus in this initial paragraph we see the first illustration of the "law of double reference" in our present section of Isaiah.

The Oracle Against Jerusalem (vss. 7-29)

Having set forth the future concerning Samaria, as we have just seen, the prophet then looked at the southern kingdom, especially to the leaders, both political and religious, and directed an oracle against them. In verses 7 and 8 he described the immoral, drunken lives of the corrupt priesthood at Jerusalem. We must take this language literally because there is nothing in the context to indicate otherwise. The clergy therefore in that day was but a group of drunkards who held their positions as the religious leaders, but who had sunk to the very depths of sin.

They resented the prophet's holding before the people the Holy One of Israel and, in a sneering mocking manner, asked the question, "Whom will he teach knowledge? and whom will he make to understand the message? them that are

weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts?" (vs. 9). The reason for their asking these questions was that Isaiah spoke very plainly and distinctly in order that everyone might get the message; but they assumed that he was endeavoring to instruct them as a teacher would small children. Thus they spoke of his teaching with "precept upon precept ... here a little, there a little" ... the kindergarten method. They considered themselves as full-grown men and able to comprehend anything.

Then the prophet declared in verses 11-13 that, since they did not like his teaching, God would speak to them in an entirely different manner—"by men of strange lips and with another tongue" (vs. 11). The ones here referred to can be none other than the Assyrians, whose language was indeed strange to the Hebrews. Of course this is a play upon words. Isaiah had been talking to them, delivering the oracles of God. They did not like the message thus delivered; therefore the prophet said that God would speak to them in a different manner—by sending this foreign aggressor and dictator with all his armed force against them. Thus the invasion by Sennacherib was God's message delivered in the sternest manner possible.

God was thus going to deal with His people—because of their continuing in sin—although He had promised that He would give them rest in the land of Canaan. Had Israel been faithful to God, He would have fulfilled the promises offered to her in such passages as Leviticus, chapter 26, and Deuteronomy, chapter 28.

Since God was forced to speak to her in such drastic language as that of an invasion by a foreign dictator, the Lord declared that He would have to continue in speaking to her "precept upon precept ... line upon line ... here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (vs. 13).

Having dealt with the jeering, mocking taunts of the drunken priests (vss. 7-13), the prophet began to lay before the people the Assyrian invasion, the second coming of Messiah, and the final purging of Israel in the Tribulation. That he was still addressing these scoffers in Jerusalem is evident from verse 14: "Wherefore hear the word of Jehovah, ye scoffers, that rule this people that is in Jerusalem ..." When one reads the entire Book of Isaiah, one sees that these leaders refused to take the prophet's message seriously. He kept threatening them with the judgment of God and their going down to Sheol, as may be seen from Isaiah 5:14. Moreover he kept holding the Holy One of Israel up to their gaze, which thing they disdained. Thus in mockery they taunted the prophet by saying that they had made a covenant with death and were in perfect agreement with Sheol. Hence his threat that they would go down to Sheol and suffer the punishment of the lost, they declared, had no force for them. One can see from the latter part of 28:15 an echo of what the prophet had also said to them; namely, that they were simply hiding under a refuge of lies and falsehoods. But these leaders had perverted ideas of truthfulness and the standards of righteousness. Regardless of how the prophet delivered his message, these profane drunken priests would break the force of the divine utterances.

Since they were taking such an attitude toward the truth of God, it was impossible for them to see the correctness of any of God's utterances. Being in this condition they would be utterly, declared the prophet, unable to recognize the Messiah when He would appear. He thus called their attention to the first coming of Messiah in the following words:

"Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste" (vs. 16).

An examination of this prophecy shows that it related to the first coming of our Lord. It was impossible for those mockers who were ruling Jerusalem in Isaiah's day to recognize the Messiah, had He come in their day. Moreover, it was impossible for those of the same character of the first century to recognize the Messiah when He actually did make His appearance. But the one who believed God and who was following the light which he had would not be in haste but would trust the Messiah for his salvation and protection.

In verse 17, however, the prophet went forward in his vision and described the second coming of our Lord in the following words:

"And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place."

In order for one to see the real significance of this verse, he should read II Kings 21:1-15, especially verse 13. In the language of this historical account and this prophecy we see that the line of justice and the plummet of righteousness and their being used refer to God's destructive judgments which He will bring upon the nation in purging all the wicked from Israel. Since verse 16 refers to the events of the first coming of Messiah and verse 17 to those of His return, we know that the entire Christian Dispensation intervenes between the events of verses 16 and 17. The prophet very frequently blended descriptions of the two comings of our Lord into a single picture as he has done here.

The leaders of Israel in the end-time will enter a covenant with death and with Sheol will they be in agreement when they make the covenant with the Antichrist, to which fact the Prophet Daniel referred in Daniel 9:27. But that covenant will not protect the people of Israel of the future. It will be the occasion, on the other hand, of special judgments coming upon those who thus enter such an agreement with this future world dictator.

As often therefore as the scourge will pass through the land of Israel, it will bring desolation to the country. Israel's plight at that time will be indeed pitiable. Her situation is represented by a man who is endeavoring to rest on a bed that is too short and under cover that is too narrow. Thus the bed and the covering of the agreement with the Antichrist will be insufficient for the protection of those relying thereupon.

According to verse 21 God will bring a signal victory for the faithful remnant of Israel as He did in the past, when He intervened in her behalf (see II Sam. 5:17-21; Joshua 10:10-14). When Israel looks to the Messiah and pleads for Him to return, having confessed her national sin, He will come and bring this marvelous deliverance.

That the prophet is looking forward to the time of the Tribulation and God's universal judgments upon the earth is evident from verse 22, in which the prophet declared, "For a decree of destruction have I heard from the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, upon the whole earth."

In verses 23-29 the prophet used a parable drawn from the field of agriculture. God has instituted the laws which govern the life of plants and vegetables. There is a time to plow, to harrow, to plant, to cultivate, and to reap. Finally the grain must be ground and cooked. Man has learned God's method of furnishing him with his daily bread. He therefore cooperates with God by planting, cultivating, and harvesting his crops. The God of the harvest is also the God controlling the spiritual and the moral realms. He heads a moral government. He uses spiritual and moral suasion to induce men to do the right thing. The Lord never forces any man's will. If one is determined to pursue his own course, irrespective of all that God says or does, he must reap what he has sowed (Gal. 6:7). The rulers of Israel had sowed the wrong kind of seed. The God of nature, as already stated, is also the God of the spiritual and the moral realms. As nature must take its course in the vegetable kingdom, so the principles operative in these realms must take their course. God has had to deal with Israel according to her life and action throughout the past and will continue to do so. Finally in the Tribulation He will be forced by her action and attitude to deal drastically with her by sending the judgments of the Tribulation, which will purge out all the wicked. He will gather the wheat from His threshing floor into His garner, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire. Then those who are represented by the kernels of wheat will be allowed to enter the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for the righteous. They will shine forth in that kingdom of glory as the stars of the firmament. Thus nature in God's moral and spiritual realm will take its course and bring its full fruition.

THE SECOND WOE (29:1-24)

Chapter 29 constitutes the second woe. In our translation, however, appears the word "Ho" in the text but "woe" in the footnote. The same word in the original occurs here as appears in the other verses where it is translated "woe." It should be thus rendered here also. Although chapter 29 constitutes this second woe, the same word appears in verse 15 of the chapter, but it is simply a reiteration of the thought and does not start another oracle of judgment.

The Prophet Isaiah declared, "Woe to Ariel, Ariel, the city where David encamped!" What is the significance of "Ariel?" According to its derivation it means either the hearth of God or the lion of God. It is not likely that it means the lion of God here because city is feminine in the original and according to usage, had Isaiah this idea in mind, he would have said the "lioness" of God—which thing he did not do. It is therefore not likely that he had that comparison in mind.

Since this same word occurs in Ezekiel 43:15 and refers to the top of the great altar in the Millennial Age and since in Isaiah 31:9 Jerusalem is represented as a furnace where the fires of God's wrath will burn, it is most likely that our prophet here thought of Jerusalem as the hearth of God. When the Jew thought of Jerusalem, he thought of the Temple first and of the great altar on which the sacrifices were offered to make atonement for them. Thus in the minds of the Hebrews the fire consuming their offerings stood out in bold relief. The transition from this idea to that of comparing the city to a furnace where the fire burns intensely was very easy. In fact, it is simply a play upon words. The fire upon the altar consumed the offerings, especially the whole burnt offerings. These were authorized by the Lord. With this thought as a background, the prophet's mind easily conceived of Jerusalem as a great altar upon which God would burn and consume the dross of the nation—the wicked—and would refine His people and bring them forth as pure gold. Malachi expressed this thought in 3:1-6.

This hearth of God is the city where David camped and where the feasts of Jehovah were observed. Shiloh was the place where the worship of God was conducted after Israel left the plains of Jericho. Finally in the days of David God selected Jerusalem out of all other places for placing His name there.

The prediction according to verse 2 foretells distress, lamentation, and mourning; but through this period of purging Jerusalem shall come forth and become His real hearth.

How will this be done? According to verse 3 it will be done by God's having it besieged. It is God who does it. How does He do that? An examination of verses 5-8 shows that He brings the nations of the world to fight against it. Micah foretold the same event but used a different figure (Micah 4:11-13). Here the prophet thought of Jerusalem as a threshing floor and the nations as sheaves of wheat which are to be brought there and to be threshed by Israel, the faithful remnant, who will be supported and strengthened by the Almighty. Zechariah also foretold the siege of Jerusalem in the day of Jehovah (Zech. 12:1 ff).

According to Isaiah 29:4 the people of Israel are thought of in terms of their mother city which is crushed into the earth and speaks out of the dust, in sepulchral tones, as if she were utterly crushed and as if the spirit had left the body. To such dire extremity will the nation be reduced during the final siege. The nations will gather in the land of Israel in order to exterminate her from the face of the globe. They will attempt to take the wealth and the riches which she will possess in her own land. They will attack the Jews, especially prompted by this motive, but will not realize that they are unconscious tools in the hand of God as was Sennacherib (see Isa. 10:5-7).

Suddenly the great hosts of the armies of the world, engaged in the mightiest conflict of all the ages, will be utterly destroyed. This prediction is seen in verses 5-8 of the prophecy which we are now studying. The Lord will use the forces of nature in the destruction and overthrow of these nations. This is seen in verse 6:

"She shall be visited of Jehovah of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with whirl wind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire."

When we study this passage in the light of related ones, we see that this conflict ends with the personal appearance of the Lord Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ, appearing in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all who knew not God and who obey not the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus will be destroyed all anti-Semitic nations. Their dream of conquest and loot is represented by a man who dreams that he eats but, when he wakes, he is still hungry.

In verses 9-12 the prophet showed why God must allow these calamities to come upon Israel: "Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink" (vs. 9).

From this verse we see that the people are told to go on in their own way and to take their pleasure because they are blind and unable to appreciate the situation in which they find themselves. They are drunken—senseless; they are blind, because God has poured out upon them the spirit of deep sleep; they cannot comprehend the message of God's Holy Word. This is an example of judicial blindness. When men who have had opportunities of knowing the will of God refuse it and prefer something else, He brings spiritual blindness upon them as a judgment and punishment. The same thing is seen in Isaiah, chapter 66, verses 3 and 4:

... Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations: 4 I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not."

A person cannot afford to refuse the light which God brings to him and to choose his own way. Judicial blindness and judgment for such are inevitable. Regardless of how much education a man may have and how brilliant he may be, unless he has the will to do the will of God he cannot understand the message of the Scriptures nor see their divine origin (John 7:17). On the other hand, if one wills to do the will of God, the Lord will open his eyes and enable him to see the divine origin of the revelation and will enable him also to comprehend its message—sufficiently to accept His salvation and to glorify Him.

According to this prediction Israel as a nation will be utterly blind and will be unable to understand the message of the Word of God. The educated will admit that they do not understand what God has said; the uneducated likewise will confess their inability to grasp the message. While this condition will characterize Israel as a nation, there will be the faithful remnant which desires truth above everything else. To this portion of the nation the light of God will burst in upon their souls.

In verses 13 and 14 the prophet lays bare one of the principal reasons for people's being unable to understand the Word. In the case of Israel, as these verses show, what the people know of God will have been taught them by rote. They draw near to God with their lips but their hearts are far from Him. They hold to the ancient faith because they are born Jews and have been taught their religion by rote. They do not take spiritual matters seriously. They hold to a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. What is here said of the Jews of the end-time might also be addressed to many who profess Christianity. All too many people are what they are religiously and believe as they do simply because they have been taught it from childhood and have not made any personal investigation to determine whether or not that which they have been taught is really set forth in the Word. To all such people the working of God in nature and in history—in current events—is hidden. This God declares:

"Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (Isa. 29:14).

God constantly works and overrules in the affairs of men. In the end of this age and in the Tribulation He will step out, figuratively speaking, into the great arena of human endeavor in a new way and direct affairs to the advancement of His plan. Nevertheless the great bulk of the people will not be able to detect His presence but will go on in their delusions, pursuing their own pleasures. Isaiah was a great statesman and prophet. Assyria, as we have already seen in former articles, was threatening the nation of Israel. There were two political parties among the people—the pro-Assyrian and the pro-Egyptian. The former wanted to placate and appease the Assyrians in order to avoid calamity. The latter wanted to call in Egyptian aid against the aggressor. Isaiah condemned both policies and insisted upon the nation's looking to God for deliverance in the crisis. As we shall see in our next study, the pro-Egyptian party had already sent in a secret manner a deputation with large gifts to Egypt in order to procure military aid. Isaiah shows that he knew of their secret plottings and condemned them (Isa. 29:15,16). In their attempting to solve their national problem this way, they were turning things upside down and were considering God, the great Potter, no more than the clay which is shaped by the potter. People do that very thing today—most unfortunately and tragically.

In the next paragraph (vss. 17-21) the prophet looked through the centuries beyond the time of crisis of the Tribulation, through which Israel must pass, and he saw the dawn of the perfect day, the great Millennial Age. In comparison with eternity the time intervening between the prophet's day and that of the great Millennial Age is very short. Hence he asked: "Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?" During the present distresses time drags upon the souls of men. But in comparison with all eternity our little disappointment and sorrows fade into insignificance and time seems to be but a tiny speck of eternity.

When that era comes, the curse will be lifted and men's bodies will be perfect. "And in that day shall the deaf hear ... the eyes of the blind shall see ... the meek also shall increase their joy in Jehovah, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" (29:18,19). At that time all oppression will cease. The "terrible ones" will have been rooted out of the earth and men of little minds and sinister motives will no longer exist.

In the final paragraph of our chapter (vss. 22-24) the prophet looked forward to the great Millennial Age and he saw Jacob in the kingdom of God. Surrounding him will be his children, the redeemed Israelites—those who have been saved through the centuries and those who will be living during the Millennial Age—who will be, according to promise, like the stars of heaven for multitude. This passage therefore presupposes the resurrection of the righteous and the increase of the nation according to promise.

Thus Israel in association with the patriarch of old, from whom the race sprang, will be "the work of my [Jehovah's] hands." God is overruling in the lives of all men. We are indeed the clay whereas He is the Divine Potter. If men will yield their hearts and lives to Him, He will make them into vessels of honor fit for the Master's use; if they do not yield completely, He will then make a less honorable vessel out of them; but, if they will not yield to Him at all and accept the salvation which He offers freely through the Lord Jesus Christ, then of course they will be banished from His presence and from the glory of His might forever.

When she is thus saved, according to verses 23 and 24, she—all the saved of Israel—"shall sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall stand in awe of the God of Israel." In that time they will never err in spirit nor misunderstand any situation. Great will be those days.

According to the signs of the times this present age is drawing rapidly to a close. The storm clouds of the Tribulation Period already are beginning to settle down upon the world. The "day of the Lord" will continue for seven years but will be followed by the marvelous Kingdom Age when the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

THIRD WOE

Last month, in our study of the Book of Isaiah, we took up the subject of "The Book of Woes"—chapters 28-35—discussing the first two woes found in chapters 28 and 29. We are now to examine the third and fourth "Woes" of this series which are found in chapters 30-32 inclusive. The first of these is found in chapter 30, the second in chapters 31 and 32.

As was stated in the preceding installment, this "Book of Woes" deals with the situation which confronted the kingdom of Judah in the early years of the reign of King Hezekiah, before the fall of Samaria the siege of which began in the sixth year of Hezekiah. Isaiah saw that the Assyrian monarch, Sennacherib, would overrun not only the northern kingdom of Israel but also the southern kingdom of Judah. In view of the ominous maneuverings of Sennacherib the pro-Egyptian party at Jerusalem was frantically endeavoring to obtain military aid from Egypt in order to meet the oncoming crisis. That which was only in a veiled manner referred to in Isaiah 29:15,16 is clearly stated in chapters 30 and 31 and is condemned in the severest terms.

THE THIRD WOE (30:1-33)

Isaiah addressed personally the pro Egyptian party and their supporters and called them "rebellious children" who refused to take counsel of Jehovah and who had made a league, not with the Spirit of God but with the Egyptians. In doing so they were adding sin to sin. Moreover, in depending upon Egypt for strength for the coming crisis they were leaning upon the arm of flesh which would result in their undoing and which would not in the least aid the nation.

In verses 6 and 7 we have the burden concerning the "beasts of the South." There is some discussion as to the meaning of this phrase. Some think that it refers to the train of camels and asses that are mentioned in the passage. On the other hand, some commentators think that this is a reference to Egypt. As is well known, Egypt was a dual monarchy, consisting of the Upper and the Lower Kingdoms. I am of the opinion that our phrase has this signification.

As mentioned in 30:4, the ambassadors whom the pro-Egyptian party had sent to Egypt were already sitting in conference with the representatives of the Egyptian crown at both Zoan and Hanes. Evidently they had hastened on their journey to Egypt and had arrived before the train of asses and camels had reached their destination. The prophet sees the slowly moving caravan laden with the riches of Jerusalem as they wended their way across the desert toward Egypt. They were bearing the price of military assistance.

The desert lying between Palestine and Egypt is indeed a dreary spot. I have passed through it myself and can testify to that fact. Isaiah spoke of it as "the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent." The weary beasts constituting this caravan had to pass through this wasteland in carrying a heavy burden for the purpose of purchasing Egyptian aid. Isaiah, however, said that their efforts would be futile because Egypt would not assist them.

Because Israel is a rebellious people (and has been from the very beginning), God instructed Isaiah to write a special message concerning them, first upon a tablet, and then to inscribe it in a book. It is quite likely that the tablet to which reference is made was none other than a clay tablet upon which the message in cuneiform would be inscribed. Archaeologists have dug up at several places samples of clay tablets which were used late in the history of Israel. These of

course are similar to the ones that have been dug up at Tel-el-Amarna in Egypt, at Boghaz-Keui in Asia Minor, and in Mesopotamia. But he was also to write the message in a book, which thing he has done. The book referred to is the Book of Isaiah, which we now possess. The special message concerning Israel which was written was that they were a rebellious people, lying children, who would not hear the law of Jehovah and who would attempt to intimidate the seers and the prophets and cause them not to speak forth faithfully the Word of God. The people were willing to listen to smooth messages which only tickled the ears but which did not hold before them the Holy One of Israel. Human nature is the same today as yesterday and as it has been since the Fall. Men do not wish to be reminded that God is a holy God, for such a Being will demand holiness in return in His people. Thus the leaders in Israel kept warning Isaiah and insisting upon his ceasing talking about the Holy One of Israel. Many people today take the same attitude toward the Word and the service of God as did the Jews of Isaiah's day.

Because of this attitude the prophet was instructed to inform the people that God would not forgive them but would hold them personally responsible for their iniquity and sin. He illustrated the sudden coming of the punishment by the falling of a wall which was bulging forth, and the result of the judgment by the breaking of a potter's vessel (vss. 13,14). Of course the Lord carried out this threat in due time.

On some former occasions God had spoken to Israel through Isaiah and had warned against all efforts to procure aid and assistance from military alliances that might be effected. In this previous oracle the Holy One of Israel had said, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (vs. 15). Even after the ambassadors had left, God said for the nation to recall them and to remain at home, trusting Him. If they did, they would be secure and would be delivered by the Lord from their foes. Moreover, the Lord urged them to be quiet and to remain in confidence; for whenever they took that attitude, He could work in their behalf, but they would not. They were relying on the arm of flesh and would not trust in their God. When the prophet suggested that they recall their ambassadors and that they remain at home quietly trusting God, they spoke out frankly and said that they would not.

The one who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek after Him. No one can please God without faith. The Lord delights to exercise our faith and our trust. If one trusts, he does not worry; if he worries, he does not trust. When Israel said that she would not trust God but would flee upon horses, the Lord declared that, since she had taken this attitude, they would have to flee. He assured them, however, that their pursuers and their persecutors would be swifter than they and that a great calamity would overcome them; for, "One thousand *shall flee* at the threat of one; at the threat of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill" (vs. 17). Every sin and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward. God must deal with man according to the merits of his case.

The Lord is very much concerned about all His people. He never willingly afflicts the children of men. It grieves His heart to punish any of His children. Humanly speaking, the Lord is reluctant to punish them but endures with long-suffering until He cannot act otherwise than to bring summary judgment upon them.

He must wait very frequently in order that He might pour out the fullness of His blessings upon His people. This is true of the people of God today and is also correct with reference to Israel, for the prophet declared, "And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for Jehovah is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him" (vs. 18). Nothing would delight the heart of God more than their letting him have full possession of their lives and working in and through them His plans and purposes in His effort to reach others. He longs to be gracious to everyone who has come to Him; but unfortunately most of His people by their lack of surrender will not allow Him to have His way in their lives. Such is the declaration found in this quotation. God has longed to be gracious to Israel, but He could not; He has wanted to have mercy upon her, but she would not allow Him to do so. These statements are in perfect accord with the declaration of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:37-39. In this

passage He declared that He often wished to gather the Jewish people as a hen does her chickens under her wings but they would not.

For these nineteen hundred years He has been anxiously awaiting the time when Israel will exalt Him in order that He might extend His grace and comfort to her and deliver her from all her troubles. The Lord cannot ignore, moral facts and spiritual principles. His holiness will not allow His dispensing His blessings indiscriminately upon even those who are called by His name. His holiness and His demand for purity on the part of His people are a check upon His love and mercy. For nineteen hundred years the Lord Jesus has been eager to be gracious to His Chosen People who are scattered to the four corners of the earth; but He can never be gracious and merciful to them until they exalt Him, for He is a God of justice.

But according to Isaiah 30:19 the time will come when He will have mercy upon His people and will restore them to their accustomed place—to the land which He gave to Abraham and his seed for a permanent possession.

"Man's extremity is God's opportunity." The Lord will have His opportunity with Israel in the time of the Tribulation. In verses 20 and 21 of our chapter the prophet declared:

"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be hidden any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers; 21 and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and, when ye turn to the left."

The time when Israel eats the bread of adversity and drinks the water of affliction is none other than the Tribulation Period. At that time the Lord will have teachers, faithful men, who will minister especially to Israel, pointing her to the way in which she should go. As I read this passage in the light of parallel scriptures, especially Revelation, chapter 7, I am convinced that these teachers who are here referred to are none other than the 144,000 Jewish evangelists to whom we are now giving the gospel. They will not seek the favor of anyone nor fear men, but will give forth the Word of God faithfully. They will therefore instruct the penitent remnant of Israel how she should go. When Israel is thus brought to her extremity, she will turn from all of her idolatry—not simply the grosser forms but its more civilized aspects, such as covetousness, which is idolatry. This is asserted in 30:22.

In the paragraph consisting of verses 23-26 we have a beautiful picture of the ideal conditions which will obtain during the Millennial Age. At the time of Israel's conversion God will lift the curse from the earth and will restore normal conditions, which existed prior to man's disobedience. We are therefore told, according to verse 23 and many other passages of scripture, that the Lord will give the rain in the proper season and that there will be an abundance of crops because the earth will give forth its full strength. Moreover, there will be plenty of food for the cattle and the other animals. They will be given the very best, as we see in verse 24. There will be no desert or barren mountains for brooks and streams of water, as is seen in verse 25, shall gush forth from the bowels of the earth at the end of this period of slaughter.

At the present time we often have dark, gloomy, dismal days, especially in certain sections of the world. When that day arrives the moon will give a brighter light. So will the sun. Atmospheric conditions will be entirely different from what they are now. This will all occur, according to verse 26, "in the day that Jehovah bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." As we learn from other portions of the Word, the Lord will heal His people when they acknowledge their national sin and plead for forgiveness. See Leviticus 26:40; Hosea 5:15-6:3; and Matthew 23:37-39.

In the last paragraph of this chapter, we see a striking prediction of the second coming of our Lord. In fact, one of the most graphic pictures of that coming is found in verses 27 and 28: "Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from far, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is as a devouring fire; 28 and his

breath is as an overflowing stream, that reacheth even unto the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction: and a bridle that causeth to err *shall be* in the jaws of the peoples."

The reader should note the fact that "the name of Jehovah cometh from far." An examination of this scripture shows that "the name of Jehovah" is but another way of speaking of Jehovah himself. When anyone investigates this passage and compares it with other predictions in the Word, he sees that the one here called Jehovah is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, when he studies these verses carefully in the light of parallel passages of the Word, he sees that this is a prediction of the second coming of our Lord when He shall come in flaming fire taking vengeance on all who know not God and who obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When He comes in fulfillment of this prediction, He will sift the nations with the sieve of destruction and will destroy the bridle that is in the jaws of the people and that causes them to err. The Lord will take into His omnipotent grip the entire world situation, will rectify all wrong, and adjust all differences. At that time He will set up that reign of righteousness for which every earnest heart yearns.

When anyone reads verse 29, he sees that the Jewish nation will at that time be joyfully expecting the Lord's return. Let us examine it: "Ye shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come unto the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel." The prophet declared that the Jews would have "a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept." When will they sing this song? and when will they be Jubilant, looking forward expectantly to something wonderful in the future? It can be no other time than that which immediately precedes the second coming of our Lord.

According to this verse the entire nation existing at that time—the faithful remnant—will be joyful and happy, just as they have been through the centuries when they were going up to Jerusalem to engage in the annual festivities of the days of their solemn assembly before the Lord. Over what will they be jubilant? For what will they be looking? There is but one answer and that is: For the personal bodily return of Jehovah to the earth to deliver them. Since they will have this attitude before He comes, there is but one conclusion to which we can come, and which is that the gospel will have been given to Israel in such a way as to convince her of the truthfulness of the message. She will believe it; she will accept it; and she will rejoice in the hope of His sudden appearance.

At His coming He "will cause his glorious voice to be heard, and will show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his* anger, and the flame of a devouring fire, with a blast, and tempest, and hailstones" when He marches into battle against the Antichrist who is here called the Assyrian (vs. 31). The Assyrian of Isaiah's day was the dominant figure upon the political horizon and represented world dominion of that day and time. From other scriptures we know that there will be a Roman prince who will sit upon the throne of the world and be its dictator. The world will be headed up under him, for to him will be given authority and power over every race, tribe, tongue, and language (Rev. 13:7,8). In view of these facts it is evident that the one whom Isaiah called the Assyrian here can be none other than the world dictator of the end-time. He will be slain by the personal appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to verse 33 a Topheth is prepared for him. When we read this passage in the light of Revelation 19:19-20:5, we come to the conclusion that this can be no place other than that which is described as the lake of fire into which the false prophet and the beast, the Antichrist, will be cast. See Isaiah 66:22-24.

THE FOURTH WOE (31:1-32:20)

Chapters 31 and 32 constitute the fourth woe in this series. The message begins with these words: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many and in horses because they are very strong but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!"

This pronouncement is an echo of verse 1 of chapter 30, at which we have already looked. It is clear from this verse that Israel was depending upon numbers and human strength and might for deliverance and not looking to the omnipotent, omniscient God. According to verse 2 the Lord is wise and will bring evil in the form of calamity upon those who incur His wrath. He sends forth His words and will not recall them. At the proper time He rises up against evildoers and against those who assist in plots of wickedness and iniquity. The Lord deals with everyone upon the basis of his work viewed in the light of the advantages and opportunities which he has enjoyed.

Those to whom Israel was looking for strength and support were men and horses, but they were not considering God, who is Spirit. When He stretches out His arm against anyone, His foe goes down in defeat. Since the Egyptians were pagan and since the children of Israel, following their carnal nature, were depending upon them the prophet declared that God would oppose both those who helped and those who were being assisted and that both would go down together. Such was the case as we see in the fulfillment of this prediction. God always works along this line in dealing with men. In order to enforce his lesson, Isaiah declared, "For thus saith Jehovah unto me, As the lion and the young lion growling over his prey, if a multitude of shepherds be called forth against Him, will not be dismayed at their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them; so will Jehovah of hosts come down to fight upon mount Zion, and upon the hill thereof. As birds hovering, so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver *it*, he will pass over and preserve *it*" (vss. 4,5).

Since these verses are introduced by the conjunction, "for," we must understand that this passage is explanatory of that which has just preceded. As we have just seen, the prophet had condemned Israel for appealing to Egypt for help. He had also asserted that the Egyptians would be of no assistance to them. They would be like a broken reed upon which one is leaning for support. Neither Israel nor Egypt was in the favor of God; on the contrary they were both under the cloud of His displeasure; He had declared that He would punish both of them and consume them. The verses just quoted throw further light upon God's dealings with Israel in this, her national crisis of that day. (We should recognize that verses 4 and 5 are explanatory of the situation which occurred in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, the event about which Isaiah was prophesying. In view of this fact it cannot possibly, as is often asserted, refer to God's protecting Jerusalem in 1917 when General Allenby captured the city from the Turks.)

The picture in the verses just quoted is that of a lion that has seized his prey and that will not be frightened away from it by any number of shepherds regardless of how much noise or demonstration they might make. In a manner similar to this, declared the prophet, God would not be frightened away by anyone from the city of Jerusalem, but would come down upon Mount Zion and protect it. As we have seen, God had foretold that He would punish both Israel and Egypt for their sins. Israel, as we have already seen, was calling upon Egypt to assist in the protection of Jerusalem. When the Assyrian would come against it, God most emphatically declared that Israel would not be the one that would protect the city but that it would be He who would do that. The lion is interested in his prey and will not be frightened away from it. God is interested in Zion and will not be driven away from it. The Assyrian might come and might do everything within his power to intimidate the people but, God declared, He would come down upon Mount Zion and would protect it. When the King of Assyria was besieging Lachish, he sent his commander-in-chief, together with a large army, up to Jerusalem demanding the surrender of the citadel. He hurled defiance at Hezekiah and the Jews and against God. By so doing he thought that he would force the surrender of the city. God spoke to Isaiah and sent him to Hezekiah with words of assurance that He himself was protecting the city and that it would not fall into the hands of the Assyrian. The prophecy was literally fulfilled then.

The Jehovah referred to here can be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in His prenatal state. When He comes down upon Mount Zion at the end of the Tribulation and fights against the nations gathered against it in the day of Jehovah, His coming at that time will be as when He fought in the day of battle. It was He who delivered the children of Israel from Egypt and accompanied them in the wilderness, as we see from the historical record and from references scattered here and there in the Scriptures. There can be no doubt in the mind of the well-informed biblical student concerning the proposition that the Lord Jesus in His prenatal state did come down and protect and deliver Jerusalem during the Assyrian crisis, of which I have just been speaking. He came down and was invisible. His presence was little known notwithstanding the evidence afforded by the result which He accomplished.

In the Revised Version the marginal reading of the words in the text, "so will Jehovah of hosts come down to fight upon mount Zion, and upon the hill thereof," is "against." Thus the rendering would be: "so will Jehovah of hosts come down to fight against mount Zion, and against the hill thereof." Either translation is grammatically correct. When one sees that in verse 3 God had threatened that He would destroy both the Egyptians, the helpers, and the Israelites, the helped, and when one remembers that these verses are explanatory of that threat, one is inclined to believe that the marginal reading is probably the preferable one. With this understanding we see that verse 4 would indicate that although Israel might get the assistance of Egypt, God would come down and fight against her and purge out the wicked. Nothing would prevent His doing this. As the lion would not be driven from his prey neither would Jehovah be turned from fighting against His enemies in both Israel and among the heathen. Verse 5 gives a thought additional to that found in verse 4. Here God promises protection and deliverance for Jerusalem. This seems to contradict the interpretation which has just been given of verse 4, but it does not. God fights against Jerusalem and her allies until He purges out the wicked ones. Then He turns in her favor and protects her, just as a bird hovers over and protects its young. This interpretation of these two verses is the only one that will fit all of the facts of this context and that will dovetail into the historical facts about which the prophet was speaking—as recorded in II Kings and Isaiah, chapters 36 and 37.

But when we read verses 6-8 of chapter 31, we see that the prophet was carried forward into the future and described the time of the Tribulation judgments. When all the facts of the context are taken into consideration therefore, we see that here is another illustration of the "law of double reference." The description of the crisis which occurred at the time of the Assyrian invasion and God's ultimate protection of Jerusalem when she was in her extremity, as set forth in verses 1-6, blends with the forecast concerning the ultimate deliverance of Jerusalem and her being purged of idolatry, which prediction we know will be fulfilled in the Tribulation at the time of our Lord's return to deliver Israel. The Messiah in His prenatal state came down and fought against Jerusalem during the Assyrian crisis and finally delivered her. That coming was invisible to mortal eyes. This description, however, blends with the forecast that He will come, visibly, bodily, and will protect Israel when she is reduced to her extremity in the Tribulation Period. When the Lord Jesus returns, He will destroy by the brightness of His coming the inveterate enemy of Israel, the Antichrist. As a prerequisite, according to verse 9, Jerusalem has to become the furnace in which its iniquity and sin are purged away before it can become the joy of the whole earth.

The Reign of King Messiah

In Isaiah 32:1-8 we have a marvelous description of the reign of King Messiah and of the wonderful results which come from His taking the reins of authority into His own hands.

That the King here foretold is Messiah cannot be doubted, for He reigns in righteousness—righteousness in the absolute sense of the term. No merely human monarch can do this, but King Messiah, being the God-man, will be able to establish such a regime as this. With Him there will be princes who will rule in justice. When we read this verse in the light of the New Testament revelation, we come to the conclusion that these princes are none other than the saints who reign

with Christ a thousand years and who assist Him in the administration of His righteous government. According to the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11ff) the one who takes his one pound and gains ten pounds will be granted the privilege of reigning over ten cities, and the one who with his one pound gains five others shall reign over five cities. This parable thus represents the bestowing of awards and positions of honor and trust to the saints of God when the Lord Jesus returns.

According to 32:2 Messiah will be a man and yet He will be the hiding place for mankind. The various prophets foretold that God would enter the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth. Emphasis is laid upon the fact that He is God and at the same time that He is man. He is not God and man but the God-man. He is the only one in whom man can have confidence and can be saved (Acts 4:12).

During the righteous reign of King Messiah, the curse will be lifted and there will be no more sickness or physical infirmities. At that time men will not be interested in foolish, trivial matters but will seek each other's good and the glory of God. Every man will live for a purpose, high and holy.

In verses 9-15 is a vivid picture of the Tribulation Period. The women of Zion are addressed in verse 9 and are told of the time of distress which lies out ahead. It will continue for over a year (vs. 10). From the Book of Daniel we know that this time of distress, the time of Jacob's trouble, will last for seven years, the last week of the seventy referred to in Daniel, chapter 9. Destruction and desolation will be in evidence in every place throughout Palestine during that time, especially the latter part of the Tribulation. This desolate condition will continue "forever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest" (32:14,15).

When that glorious era dawns "justice shall dwell in the wilderness; and righteousness shall abide in the fruitful field." The result of such a righteous reign will be peace, quietness, and confidence. Wars will be banished from the world. No more injustices will be perpetrated by anyone. Blessed will be those people who enter the Kingdom Age. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the oxen and the ass." These people who are pronounced blessed here are those of whom we read in Matthew 25:31-46—the ones whom the Saviour will put on His right hand and to whom He will speak the comforting words: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

FIFTH WOE—33:1-24

In our study of the "Book of Woes" we have investigated the pronouncements made against Samaria and Jerusalem. Only six verses were devoted to Samaria. The rest of the oracles in this section were addressed to Jerusalem. Why such seemingly disproportionate treatment? one may ask. The answer is that with increased light and advantages come added responsibilities. At the time of Isaiah's speaking the contents of this "Book of Woes" Samaria was on the verge of disappearing from history. On the other hand, Jerusalem has stood and will continue to stand. Great have been the changes which that city has experienced. Great will be its changes in the Tribulation; but glorious will be the transformation at the time of the return of our Lord—as we have seen repeatedly in our study of the Book of Isaiah.

But in our present study we are to examine Section V which presents the fifth woe, directed against Assyria the world power of Isaiah's day and sections VI and VII, presenting what one might term the "aftermath" and the "epilogue" of the "Book of Woes." The "aftermath" deals with Edom, a typical nation of the world in its attitude toward Israel; the "epilogue" presents one of the beautiful pictures of the Old Testament, giving us another glimpse of the wonderful conditions which will prevail throughout the world during the reign of our Lord.

The Oracle Concerning Assyria

"Woe to thee that destroyest, and thou wast not destroyed; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! When thou hast ceased to destroy, thou shall be destroyed; and when thou hast made an end of dealing treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee" (33:1).

As a man sows so shall he reap. This is an unchangeable law. Assyria dealt treacherously with Israel. She "double crossed" Hezekiah in a most shameful manner, ignoring the treaty of peace which she had made with the King of Judah and for which Israel paid a tremendous price. God is a moral Being. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is therefore capable of dealing out justice and righteousness to everyone. According to the verse given above everyone has to deal with God, whether he recognizes the fact or not. What is true of the individual also holds good with nations, which are as the small dust of the balances (Isa. 40:15).

God uses individuals and nations for the accomplishment of His purposes. If anyone is upright, honorable, and true, the Lord will deal with him upon that basis; if, on the other hand, he is unrighteous and unjust, taking advantage of others simply because it is within his power, the Almighty will deal with him accordingly. The principle is set forth in II Timothy 2:20,21 as well as in other places in the Scriptures. God uses men and nations to accomplish His plans and purposes. Someone had to perform the dastardly act of betraying the Son of God. The Lord therefore chose a man who by his life and actions had fitted himself for such a dreadful crime. Judah had to be punished for her sins and had to be dealt with in a most ruthless and merciless manner by a strong, intolerant power. Sennacherib and his government qualified for doing such a task. The Lord therefore used him; though as far as he was concerned, he was unaware of being thus employed. (See Isaiah 10:5-7.) When, however, God had finished with him, He destroyed him (Isa. 10:12). Thus verse 1 of chapter 33 is a compressed, concentrated resume of the prediction found in Isaiah, chapter 10.

When the Lord revealed to the Prophet Isaiah the fact that Assyria would thus deal with Israel, he prayed that the Lord would be gracious to her, as is seen in verse 2 of our chapter, and become her Deliverer.

In a most dramatic manner, according to verse 3, God answered the prayer. "At the noise of the tumult the peoples are fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations are scattered."

As we have seen, in verse 1 Assyria alone is mentioned; but in verse 3 the peoples of the earth are to be seen and Israel is delivered. The following verses, as one will see by reading them, set forth the fact that at the time here seen Israel will be enjoying the wonderful blessings of her Golden Era. In view of all these facts we discover here another instance of the "law of double reference." The picture of God's dealing with treacherous Assyria is blended with the one in which God overthrows all of her enemies, the nations of the world. This event will occur at the end of the Tribulation and at the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to take the reins of government into His own omnipotent hands.

In verse 4 is a prediction that the spoils of war left by the defeated nations of the world in the final conflict will be gathered by the victorious Israelites. Following this forecast is the prediction in verse 5 that Jehovah is exalted and is dwelling on high; and He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. We must notice the expression, "dwelleth on high." This phrase does not necessarily refer to heaven where the throne of God is; for, in verse 16 of this same chapter, we see a prediction that the faithful remnant of Israel will be dwelling on high during the Tribulation. But an examination of the context, as we shall see, reveals the fact that this expression simply indicates in this context the remnant's being protected by the power of God—being exalted by His mighty arm to a position high above the nations of the world so that they cannot touch her. Moreover, since the clause, "for he dwelleth on high," is parallel to the following one, "he hath filled Zion with justice and righteousness," it is clear that the verse is referring to Jehovah's being exalted in the city of Jerusalem and reigning there over the nations. Jerusalem will be located, as we see, on a very high mountain (Ezek. 40:1-4). At that time, according to 33:6, there will be stability, abundance of salvation, wisdom, knowledge, and the worship of God. This

prediction therefore is a forecast of the glorious condition which will obtain when Messiah returns to Zion and assumes His regal powers.

In the following paragraph, verses 7-12, the prophet again returns to the theme with which he began the discourse; namely, the treacherous manner in which Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had dealt with Hezekiah and the Jews. Read the historical account in II Kings 18:13-37. When Sennacherib was besieging Lachish, he demanded of Hezekiah a terrible indemnity in order not to fight against him. Hezekiah impoverished the nation, depleted the Temple treasury, and sent the money demanded. No sooner had he received the money, then he sent his commander-in-chief with a large force to Jerusalem in order to besiege it. By the time the ambassadors who had taken the tribute money were returning to Jerusalem, the Assyrian army was standing without the gates of Jerusalem demanding complete capitulation. Thus Hezekiah's ambassadors of peace, according to verse 7, were standing without the city weeping—because their mission had failed. In the following verses, 8-12, is a very vivid description of the condition of the country after it had been overrun by the Assyrian army. One gathers from this description that it was in the fall when the leaves of the trees were falling and the picture of dismay greeted the eyes of everyone.

The Lord seeing the treacherous manner in which Sennacherib had dealt with Hezekiah declared that He would arise, lift Himself up, be exalted. He therefore asserted that He would deal summarily with such double-dealers. A reading of verses 11 and 12, however, shows that the vision had enlarged to a world outlook when God deals with the peoples of the earth who become "as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire." Thus again there is a blending of the situation of Isaiah's day with that which will obtain in the end-time when God deals with the nations of the earth.

In verses 13-16 we have a vivid description of the two classes into which Jewry will be divided at this future time. The sinners, the apostates in Israel, will be brought to their wit's end and will be unable to understand the situation. They will realize that it is too late for them and that they cannot continue to live under the mighty sledge-hammer blows of the judgments of the Almighty.

On the other hand, there is a beautiful picture of the faithful remnant of Israel that is living up to the light it has. We see that these will be endeavoring to live upright, honorable lives. To them the Lord makes the promise that He will supply everything which they need—protection from the enemy, water and food—as He did for Israel in her wilderness wanderings at the time of the Exodus. There are other references to the special protection which God will extend to the faithful remnant of the nation during the Tribulation.

In the paragraph consisting of verses 17-24 appears one of the most beautiful pictures of the millennial Jerusalem and the reign of our Lord to be found anywhere in the Scriptures. The King will be there in His beauty—in Jerusalem. The land will not be rough and rugged as it is now. On the contrary, the topography of the country will be changed. Men shall "behold a land that reacheth afar." The vision of Balaam (Numbers, chapter 24) will be fulfilled. The mountains will be thrown down, the valleys filled, and the Holy Land will look like a valley that reaches afar and will be enjoying Edenic conditions.

At that time the faithful remnant that survives the Tribulation and enters the great Millennial Era will muse upon the experiences of that time of trouble saying, "Where is he that counted, where is he that weighed *the tribute*? where is he that counted the towers? In answer to this meditation the Lord declares that they will never again see such a fierce people, cruel and ruthless.

Then again, in verse 20, the prophet called his auditors' attention to the beauty of the city of Jerusalem of that day and compared it to a tent whose cords and whose stakes can never be removed. It will be the royal palace of Jehovah himself, who will be there in majesty. It will be a place of broad rivers and streams in which no battleship or man-of-war

will ever sail. From Zechariah, chapter 14, we learn that there will go forth a stream from Jerusalem and that it will divide, part going toward the western sea and part toward the eastern. There will be ships upon those waters but no warships, the reason being "For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; he will save us." The reign of King Messiah in the literal city of Jerusalem in Palestine is asserted in the most beautiful manner in Zephaniah 3:14-17.

In Isaiah 33:23 the present Jerusalem is represented by a ship whose tacklings are loosed. The mast is insecure and the ship cannot be sailed. In other words, the city is represented as a disabled ship left to the mercy of the storm. But it will not be that way when Jehovah in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ returns to Zion. At that time "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." All will be glory, joy, and happiness at that time.

Aftermath

WORLD JUDGMENT (34:1-17)

With the conclusion of chapter 33 we have completed the study of the five WOES pronounced at that time by the prophet. This section of the Book of Isaiah properly concludes with an "aftermath"—a description of God's judgments of the world which is set forth in Isaiah, chapter 34; and an "epilogue"—a description of the Millennial Age, found in chapter 35.

WORLD JUDGMENT

Judgment of the Nations and the Curse of Edom

From verse 1 of chapter 34 we see that the prophet had the nations of earth in mind. Before God moves He calls the attention of the nations to what He intends to do. He warns them of this impending action. That this is a world situation here described is evident from verse 2: "For Jehovah hath indignation against all the nations, and wrath against all their host." Following this statement are these words: "He hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter." The marginal reading is, "he hath devoted them to destruction ..." The marginal reading is preferable because it fits into the facts of the context. God is giving the warning before the judgments fall. Hence He states the decision to which He has come: namely, that He has in His plan devoted them to destruction. He will therefore carry out His threat.

From verse 3 we see that the slain of Jehovah will be everywhere throughout the world. Bodies decaying and decomposing and giving forth disagreeable odors. A similar prediction is found in Jeremiah 25:32-34. Isaiah, in verse, 4, foretold the dissolution of the heavenly bodies during this time when God punishes the nations of earth—in the Tribulation Period. He therefore declared, "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading *leaf* from the fig tree." This language is to be taken at its face value because there is nothing in the context to indicate a departure from the literal meaning. This theme the Apostle Peter discussed in the third chapter of II Peter. An examination of its context shows that the apostle was speaking of the events of the day of Jehovah. At that time, according to his prediction, the heavenly bodies will be dissolved and pass away with a great noise and the earth will burn with intense fire. There will be volcanic eruptions here and there on the earth. The smoldering fires that are deposited in the earth will burst forth into mighty conflagrations. Since Peter gave that description in reply to the mockers who question the second Coming of Christ, it is evident that he was talking about the Tribulation and what will occur at that time. All the facts of the context point in that direction. It is, however, unfortunate that many Bible commentators have overlooked the time element of both the Isaiah passage and the one in II Peter and have applied them to the events connected with the conclusion of the Millennium.

Returning to Isaiah, chapter 34, let us note the prediction of verses 5 and 6:

"For my sword hath drunk its fill in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edom, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. 6 The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom." With the sword men fought in the days of Isaiah. It is the symbol of war. According to this prediction the sword of the Lord at the time here foreseen will have drunk its fill in heaven; then it comes down to earth to execute judgment upon Edom. To what does this refer? When one remembers that Isaiah was speaking about the Tribulation and when one examines the Book of Revelation, chapters 6-19, which deal with the Tribulation, one comes to the conclusion that Isaiah in our present passage was talking about the war which will be in heaven—Michael and his angels fighting against the devil and his forces—and which conflict is mentioned in Revelation 12:7-12. This event occurs in the middle of the Tribulation. After Satan and his hosts are driven from the battlements of heaven, they come to the earth and engage in feverish activity,

knowing that their time is very short. But the sword of Jehovah, who wins the victory in heaven, also comes down to the earth and wins a signal victory here against these mighty powers of darkness, as well as against the inveterate enemies of God in the form of men.

The sword of God especially comes to Bozrah as we see in verse 6. This was one of the leading cities of Edom. When the Lord Jesus returns in flaming fire at the conclusion of the Tribulation, He will first appear in Bozrah. Isaiah, in chapter 63, verses 1-6, gives us this information. Habakkuk likewise in the third chapter of his prophecy sees the Messiah after He has struck His terrific blow in the land of Edom.

In verse 6 the prophet spoke of the slaughter of the population of Edom as if they were animals that are sacrificed. "The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom." In the next verse (7), continuing his thought on this point, the prophet spoke of certain ones as wild oxen and bulls, that likewise are slaughtered at this future time.

That this prediction will be fulfilled is guaranteed by the fact that God has "a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion" (vs. 8). An examination of the history of Edom in its relation to Israel shows that the Edomites, though they were blood-kin of Israel, were inveterate enemies, committing every crime against them possible. He who touches Israel touches the apple of God's eye. No weapon that is formed against Israel shall prosper. The day of recompense will surely come. God exhausts all means at His disposal to bring wicked men and nations to repentance. When He has exhausted all His means of restoring them, there is but one thing which He can do; namely, to bring judgment upon such incorrigible ones. In this category the Edomites are found. Therefore the Tribulation is called "a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion."

In verses 9 and 10 of this chapter the prophet gives one of the most graphic and lurid pictures of the condition of the land that one can find anywhere. The streams instead of being filled with water will be "turned into pitch," and the very dust of the land will be turned "into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever."

Instead of there being men, as formerly, throughout the land, "the pelican and porcupine shall possess it; and the owl and the raven shall dwell therein." It will be a kind of zoological garden in which the wild, vicious beasts that now roam the earth because of the curse upon them will be kept on exhibition. Why this will be, I cannot say. But such is the plain declaration of the Word of God, which I accept and believe with all of my heart. At some time we shall know the reason why God thus reduces the land of Edom to such a condition and why He will allow all of these vicious animals to be in that land. Of course they will never be permitted to leave that country and wander out upon the rest of the earth which, with the exception of that land and possibly Babylon, will be delivered from the curse at the second coming of our Lord.

In verse 16 is the following exhortation: "Seek ye out of the book of Jehovah, and read: no one of these shall be missing, none shall want her mate; for my mouth, it hath commanded, and his Spirit, it hath gathered them." The Scriptures constitute the Book of Jehovah. In it He has given us His revelation concerning things that are to come. Scattered throughout its pages are the names of many of the animals that now exist. Every animal thus appearing in the Book of Jehovah will be in that zoological garden with its mate. The guarantee that this condition will exist is the fact that God has commanded it and His Spirit will bring them together. Jehovah has cast the lot for this unique land and this zoological garden. It will certainly be there in fulfillment of the plan and purpose of God. According to verse 17 it will continue throughout the Millennial Age—from generation to generation. Whether or not the people from various parts of the earth

will visit this portion of the world—the land of Edom—we cannot say. It is quite likely that they will. I might illustrate this by calling attention to the fact that there were certain reservations on the battlefields of France which were set apart and which were left exactly as they were the day the Armistice was signed in 1918. These became national parks, memorials of that mighty conflict. It may be that God sets apart the land of Edom which will be in the terrible condition mentioned in verses 8-10 and in which will be gathered the ferocious animals mentioned in this passage and also referred to in other portions of the Word in order to make the land a kind of museum, illustrating the terrible consequences of the curse which fell upon the earth when man sinned. I am simply throwing this thought out as a possible explanation; but since the Scriptures are silent on this point, we shall do well likewise to remain silent.

WORLD BLESSING—MILLENNIUM (35:1-10)

It is fitting that the Book of Woes should end with a vivid picture of the glorious millennial reign of our Lord. In 35:1,2 we have a marvelous description of the transformation which will take place in the desert. Personally I have been out on the Arabian Desert and have traveled through the desolate country in Moab and Edom. I have also passed through the desert which separates Palestine from Egypt. Likewise I have been out on the great Sahara Desert. Of course I have crossed the great western deserts in America. Whenever I see these great wastelands, as a rule I think of this marvelous prediction which is found in Isaiah 35:1,2:

"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God."

This passage means exactly what it says, namely, that there will be a transformation that will come upon the desert. In the prophet's speaking of this great change, he does use some figures of speech. But anyone can recognize that which is literal and that which is figurative. When due consideration is paid to the figures used and when they are properly interpreted, one sees that Edenic conditions are here promised for deserts and wastelands of this earth. The desolations that are observable upon the earth are due to the curse which fell upon the world when Adam sinned. When the Lord Jesus returns He will of course lift the curse and Edenic conditions will be restored, in fulfillment of this and many other predictions.

Isaiah urged his contemporaries to strengthen those who were weak in faith and doubting: "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees." That he was not talking about infirmities of the flesh but rather that of a hesitating and doubting mind is seen from the following statement: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *with* the recompense of God; he will come and save you."

Before the Old Testament saints the prophets held up constantly the glorious visible coming of Jehovah to earth, to set up His reign of righteousness. They were therefore urged to wait patiently for His appearance. King David said that he would have fainted if he had not been buoyed up by the hope of seeing Jehovah in the land of the living (Psa. 27:13,14). In Psalm 37 the writer urged his readers to wait for Jehovah's appearance.

The appearance of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 35:4 is His second coming. The proof of this position is seen in the fact that the coming referred to is with vengeance and with the recompense of God. When the Lord came the first time, He was the very embodiment of grace, mercy, and truth. When He returns, He will come with vengeance and will reward His servants and will recompense the evildoers according to their ways. It is therefore clear that the coming to which Isaiah in our passage refers is none other than the second coming of Jesus, who will come and save the faithful remnant.

In this connection let us remember that there are passages in the Word which speak only of the first coming. The facts of each context in such cases indicate this interpretation. There are others that refer only to the second coming, such as this one. There are still other prophecies which speak of the entire redemptive career of King Messiah, consisting of the two comings and the Christian Dispensation separating those two events. (For a full discussion of this point, see my volume, *The World's Greatest Library Graphically Illustrated*.)

According to Isaiah 35:5,6 the infirmities which now characterize man will pass away. The "eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing." This is but another echo of the predictions which forecast the lifting of the curse and the restoration of primitive Edenic conditions to man.

In the latter part of verse 6 and in verse 7 appear references to the changes that will take place in the physical realm. In the wilderness there will burst forth refreshing waters and streams. The same thing will be true in those places that are now desert wastes. There will be no swampy, untillable land, but it will all be productive.

There will be a great highway for the redeemed to return to Zion. This is mentioned in verse 8. "And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for *the redeemed*: the wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err *therein*." No ravenous beast shall be seen there. In Isaiah, chapter 19, there is likewise a prediction that there will be a great highway running from Assyria through Palestine down into Egypt in order that there may be rapid and convenient transportation between the three nations which God at that time will call His special people—Israel, Egypt, and Assyria. When the passage in 35:8 is compared with the one in Isaiah, chapter 19, it becomes apparent that probably the prophet in these two places was speaking of the same highway.

This highway has by some commentators been understood to be a prediction of the gospel and its conditions of salvation. Thus we are told that the gospel is so very plain and clear that the "wayfaring men, yea fools, shall not err *therein*." I admit that the gospel plan of salvation is very clear and anyone, even with subnormal intelligence, can comprehend it and can accept the Lord Jesus Christ and enjoy His salvation. About this proposition there can be no question. But when Isaiah 35:8 and the highway mentioned there are studied in the light of the facts of Isaiah 19 and parallel statements, one sees that Isaiah was not speaking of the gospel at all but was talking of a literal highway that will connect Assyria and Egypt in the Millennial Age. This position becomes more abundantly apparent when we recognize that in verses 5-10 of this chapter the prophet was speaking of things out beyond the second coming of our Lord. Thus one does violence to the Scriptures, when one interprets this passage as a reference to the gospel.

On this great international highway of the Millennial Age the redeemed people of Jehovah "shall return, and come with singing unto Zion," praising God; then "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy," which will be the order of the day, "and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Great will be the blessings which await the faithful remnant of Israel—together with all the saved of this age!

HISTORICAL PORTION OF THE PROPHECY

Chapters 36-39

SENNACHERIB'S CHALLENGE TO THE ALMIGHTY (36:1—37:38)

Isaiah, chapters 36-39, constitute the historical portion of this book. In chapter 10 and in the "Book of Woes" (chaps. 28-35), especially chapters 28-32, Isaiah had foretold the Assyrian invasion of both Israel and Judah. The oracle contained in chapter 10, as we have already learned, was uttered in the days of King Ahaz, but the oracles of the "Book of Woes" were spoken in the first years of the reign of King Hezekiah. These predictions were fulfilled in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign as we learn in 36:1: "Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them."

God sees the end from the beginning and has told His servants the things that must come to pass, especially the important matters—those things upon which history hinges.

There is quite a discussion among students of history as to what year was the fourteenth of Hezekiah. Some scholars date this fatal year as 711 B.C. of the Ussher chronology. Others designate it as 705 B.C. of the same chronology. Still others place it in 701 B.C. of the same system. The discrepancies among these students are traceable to the faulty system of the Ussher chronology and the incorrect identification of certain events. But the correct date in Bible chronology is the year 3414 A.H. (*Anno Hominis*—in the year of man; the chronology which starts its reckoning with the creation of Adam and traces it through the centuries to the crucifixion).

In order for one to appreciate fully the situation reflected in these chapters, one must read the account found in II Kings 18:13-18. (This historical section of II Kings appears as chapters 18:13—20:21. The prayer of Hezekiah recorded in Isaiah, chapter 38, however, is missing from the Kings account. One would do well to read this history in both the Book of Isaiah and in II Kings.) From II Kings, chapter 18, we see that after Sennacherib had overrun the land of Judah and had reduced its fortified cities to ruins, Hezekiah robbed the Temple of its gold and the king's treasury in order to raise tribute money to pay to Sennacherib as an indemnity of war and as a guaranty that he would leave the country and establish peace. While he was still warring against Lachish, which is southwest of Jerusalem, he received the tribute money. Notwithstanding that fact he flagrantly violated his pledged word and sent an army under the Rabshakeh up to Jerusalem to demand the abject surrender of Hezekiah and the capital city.

At the time of the Rabshakeh's arrival he stood at the conduit of the upper pool which was in the highway of the fuller's field. There has been some discussion as to what is referred to by the "upper pool." Some think that it is on the western outskirts of Jerusalem, but the preponderance of events supports the conclusion that it was the Virgin Fountain which is in the Valley of Kidron east of the Temple area or a little south of east. This pool is called the Virgin Fountain, the waters of which flow through the tunnel chiseled by Hezekiah in anticipation of this siege. This tunnel runs through Ophel, the hill just south of the Temple area. It is 1,752 feet long and conveys the water from the Virgin Fountain to the Pool of Siloam. From there it flows down through the Valley of Hinnom on its way to the Dead Sea.

The Interview Between the Rabshakeh and His Company and the Jewish committee

Hezekiah sent a committee of the leading Jews out to talk with the Rabshakeh (Isa. 36:3). This they did in order to report to Hezekiah the message from Sennacherib.

The Assyrian commander-in-chief instructed the Jewish committee to take a message to Hezekiah which began with these words: "Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria." The kings of Assyria were very much conceited and put themselves upon a high pedestal. This king had been victorious over the smaller states in the west and his egotism had

become so very much inflated that he considered himself above, not only the kings of the smaller nations, but also above their gods. He therefore asked of Hezekiah this question: "What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?" Then he asserted that the counsel and the strength for the war upon which Hezekiah was depending was simply vain words. Following this remark he asked the further question: "Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou hast rebelled against me?" Evidently Sennacherib had heard that the pro-Egyptian party in Jerusalem had appealed to the Egyptians for help and were expecting assistance from that quarter. Thus the Assyrian king belittled the strength and power of Egypt, saying that it was but a bruised reed upon which Hezekiah was attempting to lean for support. This statement by the Rabshakeh was correct because the arm of flesh is indeed vain, for anyone.

He declared that, if they were trusting in Jehovah their God, they could not depend upon Him because Hezekiah had taken away His altars throughout Judea and had demanded that the people come to Jerusalem to worship. This is a reference to the great reforms which Hezekiah instituted when he came to the throne. The king of Assyria, with his commander-in-chief, thought that there were many different gods which were worshiped in various places in Judah and that, when Hezekiah destroyed all the altars except the one in Jerusalem, he had incurred the displeasure of all these gods. Of course in this supposition he was absolutely wrong.

By these cunningly worded statements Sennacherib hoped to destroy the morale of Hezekiah and his supporters. The last argument which was advanced was that Hezekiah did not have sufficient soldiers to ride upon two thousand horses. He offered to give them two thousand horses if they could produce that many cavalymen. Of course the horse and his rider was a very formidable method and means of warfare in those ancient times. Sennacherib's conclusion was that, if Hezekiah did not have the two thousand cavalymen, he was very foolish in not submitting to him but in trusting in Egypt.

Moreover, he asserted that he, the great king of Assyria, had come against Hezekiah by order of Jehovah who had told him to go up against Jerusalem. We know from comparing other scriptures with this one that God was overruling and that He was bringing Sennacherib against His people in order to chasten them. Nevertheless, Sennacherib did not receive a revelation from God to the effect that he was to go against Jerusalem.

The Jewish committee stood quietly and listened to the speech which was made by the Rabshakeh. Then they requested him to speak to them in the Syrian language (that is, the Aramaic) because they understood it. They did not want him to speak in the Hebrew language lest it would intimidate the people who were upon the walls of Jerusalem and who were observing what was going on and listening to what was being said. In reply to the committee the Rabshakeh said that he had come to bring a message, not to Hezekiah and the officials of the kingdom of Judah, but rather to the people of the city, upon whom the terrible weight of the struggle would fall (vs. 12).

Then Rabshakeh cried with a loud voice and called upon the people upon the city walls to listen to what the great king of Assyria had to say. His first argument was that they should not let Hezekiah deceive them, for he would be unable to deliver them in the time of battle. Moreover, he warned them not to put their trust in Jehovah, for, he declared, the Lord will not deliver the city out of the hand of the great king of Assyria. Then he called upon the people to make peace with him and to come out and surrender to him. The inducement which he offered them was that they would have plenty of food to eat and water to drink until he would come and take them away to a land which was like their own, "a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards." Of course this promise was the same old political bait, which conquerors and dictators always hold out to the great masses of the people, in order that they might get into power. Many of the old Roman emperors gained the imperial purple because they catered to the masses and promised a modern Utopia to them if they would support them in their efforts to gain the throne. It is needless to say that such politicians are never able to fulfill their promises. Campaign speeches, in so very many instances, are not worth the paper upon which they are written. We do praise God, however, that there are some real statesmen who analyze the situation which confronts a

people and who honestly and conscientiously do endeavor to fulfill the pledges which they make to the people. For such we praise the Lord.

Finally, the Rabshakeh concluded his speech by urging the people not to trust in Jehovah. In this connection he asserted that none of the gods of the various nations which had been conquered by Sennacherib had been able to deliver those lands out of the hands of the great Assyrian king.

Notwithstanding the defiant speech designed to intimidate the Jewish committee and the many falsehoods which were incorporated in the statements of the Rabshakeh, the Jewish committee held its peace and would not reply to even one word. The reason for their silence was that they had been instructed beforehand by Hezekiah saying, "Answer him not." Thereupon the committee returned to the city and reported to Hezekiah what they had heard. They appeared before the king, having rent their clothes, which was an indication of their great, overwhelming sorrow and grief at the message which they had heard.

The Situation in the Hands of Hezekiah and Isaiah

When the committee reported to Hezekiah the words of the Rabshakeh, he likewise rent his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of Jehovah. The king realized the situation which was confronting him and recognized the fact that only in God was there any hope. His going to the house of God to lay the matter before the Almighty reminds one of the way in which Jehoshaphat acted when his territory was invaded by an enormous army. The account of this crisis in Judah's history is found in II Chronicles, chapter 20, and will well repay a careful study.

No situation confronting a nation at any time is so very serious that it cannot be dealt with by Jehovah the God of hosts, who can be approached at any time and under all conditions by those who know and who trust Him. For instance, when David was driven out of his kingdom by the revolt of Absalom and the government was completely overthrown, his friends advised him to flee like a bird to the mountains. They could see nothing but wreck, ruin, and disaster for everyone, especially for the king. David's faith rose to the occasion, and he declared in answer to their urgings, "Jehovah is in his holy temple; Jehovah, his throne is in heaven; his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." Civil governments may be overthrown, countries may be overrun, dictators may be hurling out challenges against God and blaspheming Him, but the Almighty still sits enthroned in power and majesty. Before Him all the nations are as a drop in a bucket, as the small dust of the balances. He is in His holy Temple and may be approached by His faithful children. He allows such crises to come into the lives of His people and of nations in order to try them and to purge out the wicked. This is the theme of Psalm 11 and it should be studied in connection with the action of Hezekiah on the occasion referred to in the passage which we are now studying.

As Hezekiah waited before the Lord in earnest prayer, he realized that the only thing for him to do was to report the threat to Isaiah, the great statesman-prophet. This committee sent by Hezekiah to Isaiah said that the situation was grave and that there was no strength to bring forth (37:3). Then they declared: "It may be Jehovah thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to defy the living God, and will rebuke the words which Jehovah thy God hath heard."

Upon the arrival of the committee from Hezekiah, Isaiah had already received a message from the Lord and consequently instructed them to return to Hezekiah and say, "Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7 Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land" (37:6,7).

After the Rabshakeh had delivered his threatening message of defiance and blasphemy, he returned to his master, the king of Assyria, to Libnah because Sennacherib had in the meantime raised the siege of Lachish and had gone to Libnah.

The reason for his sudden change of plans was that he had heard that Tirhakah, the king of Ethiopia, was coming against him. But he continued bluffing and sent a delegation of messengers to Hezekiah a second time with the following message:

"10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden that were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah?" (37:10-13).

There was nothing new in the second speech of intimidation which was sent to Hezekiah. It seems, however, that this message was delivered by the second group of ambassadors in the form of a letter.

When Hezekiah received this communication from the hands of the messengers, he read it and then went immediately to the house of Jehovah and spread it before the Lord. Hezekiah was a godly man who was endeavoring to do the will of the Almighty. It is a great thing, especially in times of crises, to have as the national leader a man who knows God and who knows how to trust Him and look to Him for deliverance. God is the one who tips the scales in every crisis. We have been told that God is on the side of the biggest gun. That statement is Satan's lie. No king is delivered by a multitude of hosts. A horse is a vain thing for safety, declared the inspired writer in Psalm 33. The eyes of Jehovah are against the proud, insolent, haughty, godless ones, but, declared the sacred writer:

"Behold, the eye of Jehovah is
upon them that fear him,
Upon them that hope in his
lovingkindness."

His eye is open to them who are humble and who trust in His kindness. God brings victory to those who are trusting Him and who are in a position to fit into His plan and purpose, which runs through the centuries.

Having read the letter of defiance against God and His people, Hezekiah prayed to Jehovah, the God of Israel who sits above the cherubim. When we read this last clause and study it in the light of Psalm 80:1-3 and related passages, we know that the one who is seated above the cherubim is none other than the man of God's right hand who is at His right hand and who will come to earth and deliver Israel when she calls upon him to do so. (See Psalm 80; especially verses 1-3 and 17). This one is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hezekiah recognized Him, according to Isaiah 37:16, as the God of all the kingdoms of the earth who has made the heaven and the earth. From other passages we know that Christ is the one by whom the entire material universe was created (John 1:1-4). He is the King of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5).

Hezekiah pleaded with the Lord to incline His ear and to hear; to open His eyes and see and hear all the words of Sennacherib with which he had defied the living God. He also called the Lord's attention to the fact that the king of Assyria had destroyed the gods of the various lands which he had conquered. They were, as he asserted, but wood and stone; nevertheless, we learn from Psalm 106:37,38, that idols are backed up by demons.

Finally, Hezekiah implored the Lord to save his nation from the hands of Sennacherib in order that "all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art Jehovah, even thou only." The overthrow of Sennacherib will, yet in the future, be proof and evidence that God is sovereign over all the nations of the earth.

The word of Jehovah came to Isaiah who sent the following message to Hezekiah:

"Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22 this is the word which Jehovah hath spoken concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23 Whom hast thou defied and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy One of Israel. 24 By thy servants hast thou defied the Lord, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof and I will enter into its farthest height, the forest of its fruitful field; 25 I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt" (Isa. 37:21-25).

The Lord calls Jerusalem "the virgin daughter of Zion." This was the regular Old Testament term applied to a city which could not be conquered by an adversary. Thus this virgin daughter of Zion laughed to scorn the proud, haughty words of the king of Assyria, asking him whom he had blasphemed and asserting that his words were in reality against the Holy One of Israel.

A Glance at verses 24 and 25 shows that the purpose of the king of Assyria when he left his native land was to invade the innermost parts of Lebanon, that is, Syria and Palestine. The Lebanon Mountains were famous for their cedar and fir trees, together with their fruitful trees. Since the same mountain range continues through both countries, they were designated as Lebanon. Moreover, according to verse 25, Sennacherib purposed to go down into Egypt and to conquer it. This is seen in the words, "I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt." It was his plan, which he considered as good as accomplished, to overrun the entire country of Egypt and to destroy its military power.

The Lord continued His revelation, speaking through Isaiah and addressing the following words to the king of Assyria: "26 Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? now have I brought it to pass, that it should be thine to lay waste fortified cities into ruinous heaps. 27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as a field of *grain* before it is grown up" (vss. 26,27).

These verses show that the success of the campaign which was carried out by Sennacherib was due solely to the fact that the Lord had a plan and a purpose in permitting his conquests. The famous conquests of Cyrus, as we shall see later in this exposition, was due solely to the fact that he was an unconscious instrument in the hands of Almighty God to carry out the divine plans and purposes with reference to restoring Israel to her own land. God uses nations and their rulers for the forwarding of His own plans and purposes.

When, however, the Assyrian king became proud, haughty, and arrogant, and thought of himself as having supernatural strength and power and began to rave against the God of heaven, the Almighty took note of the fact and declared that He would put His hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips and turn him back by the way which He had come. In this language we see that the prophet thought of Sennacherib as a wild beast into whose nose the Lord would insert a hook and then would put a bridle upon him and force him to go in the direction which He himself had chosen. This is but a pictorial way of asserting that the providence of God would change the course of the proud, raving Assyrian and would cause him to go back to his own land—after the Lord has accomplished His purpose with him.

The Lord gave a sign to Hezekiah that the prophecy would be fulfilled by calling his attention to the fact that the people that year would eat that which grew of itself and in the second year the same kind of crop, but in the third year they would be free from the foreign threat. They would therefore sow, reap, and eat the fruit of their own labors (vs. 30).

In verse 31 the prophet called attention to the fact that there would be a remnant of the people who would survive the catastrophe. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts was the guaranty that this prophecy would be fulfilled. Isaiah is

famous for his doctrine of the remnant. There has always been a remnant in Israel. This is the nation of destiny. The great nations of antiquity, as well as those of modern times, have done their utmost in order to destroy the Chosen People. They have never succeeded. They never will.

Speaking of the indestructibility of the Jewish nation, Mark Twain well declared:

"He [the Jew] could be vain of himself and not be ashamed of it. Yes, he could be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian arose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff, and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up, and held the torch high for a time; but it burned out, and they sit in twilight, or have vanished.

"The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert, aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. *What is the secret of his immortality?*"

Mark Twain asked, "What is the secret of his immortality?" The answer is to be found in Deuteronomy 32:8,9:

"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the children of men.
He set the bounds of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.
For Jehovah's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."

And in Malachi 3:6:

"For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

God has a plan for His ancient people Israel. He will yet use them—when they permit Him to do so.

Concerning this remnant we shall learn more in the succeeding chapters of the Book of Isaiah.

The concluding portion of Isaiah's message to Hezekiah on this occasion is found in verses 33-35, in which passage God asserted that He would protect the city and be a shield to it, not allowing the Assyrian even to shoot an arrow at it.

In the last paragraph of Isaiah, chapter 37, verses 36-37, we have a brief account of Sennacherib's returning to his own land after his triumph—and also his defeat when the angels of the Lord slew 185,000 of his army. Sennacherib went back to Nineveh and dwelt there.

One day he went into the house of his god to worship. While he was there, two of his sons entered stealthily, crept up behind him, and murdered him. After their evil deed was accomplished, they escaped into the land of Ararat.

"And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead."

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS AND THE VISIT OF THE AMBASSADORS FROM BABYLON

Chapters 38:1—39:8.

Hezekiah's Sickness

In Isaiah 38:1 we are told that "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death." This date ties up with that found in 36:1 which is the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign. This sickness doubtless occurred before the threatened siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, about which event we studied in installment fourteen of this series, and which is found in chapters 36:1—37:38.

Hezekiah's sickness seems to have been of a fatal nature, for it was "unto death." One can never know what purpose God has in view in permitting even sickness. Let us in this connection always remember that "... to them that love God all things work together for good, *even to* them that are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

In verse 1 of chapter 38 we are told that Isaiah the prophet went to the king and spoke from the Lord the following sentence: "Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." Hezekiah's sickness would have proved fatal had it not been for the mercy of the Lord in extending his life as we shall presently see.

The king was instructed to "set thy house in order." What is the significance of this expression? Doubtless it involved all that we would call in modern phraseology "making one's will," and making all adjustments and arrangements in personal and governmental affairs. Thus Hezekiah was told to arrange all his affairs and to attend to all the business that was necessary for him to look after. Then he was to make his will so that the affairs of the government might be carried on without any serious disruption after his death.

Hezekiah's reaction was one of disappointment and rebellion against the will of God. This fact is seen in the words: "2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto Jehovah, 3 and said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore" (38:2,3).

Without doubt he was disappointed. In these words there is echoed a lack of surrender to do the will of God at all costs. Moreover the king seemed to depend, to a certain extent at least, upon his good works in order to win the favor of God. It is true that he was a good man and that he had endeavored to serve God and to rule in the fear of the Lord. Nevertheless, there was seemingly a feeling of smugness and satisfaction over the fact that he had acted as he had.

In answer to the king's prayer the word of God came to Isaiah saying, "4 Then came the word of Jehovah to Isaiah, saying, 5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city" (vss. 4-6).

We are told that prayer changes things, that prayer brings victory. Was it the will of God that Hezekiah die then? Had God decreed that he should die? Or shall we attribute his condition to the sickness which was unto death? If we say that it was God's plan for him to pass away from the scene of action at that time, then Hezekiah did not accept God's first plan and purpose for his life. On the other hand, if his condition was simply the result of what we would call the course of nature, with reference to his sickness, then we can see that Isaiah's statement regarding Hezekiah's dying was simply a straightforward statement of facts, if nature were allowed without the intervention of God to take its course. The general impression that the passage makes upon one's mind, however, is that the time had arrived for the king to be gathered together to his fathers. However on this point we cannot be dogmatic.

The fact that Isaiah was sent to the king to tell him of his critical situation may have been an invitation to him to pray earnestly, because prayer changes things. Everyone who has had personal dealings with God in the most intimate way can testify that prayer does change things and that prayer often brings victory, of one kind or another. God frequently states the case, the outcome of a certain situation when nature is allowed to take its course, in order that the one who is involved might throw himself upon the mercy of God and be delivered. God said to Moses that He would blot out the race of Israel from being a nation and would make of him a great people. This announcement was but an urgent invitation for Moses to rush into the breach by earnest prayer and to beseech the Lord to spare His people. Moses realized the situation and was equal to the occasion. He therefore prayed for the people, and they were spared.

Sometimes people are very insistent upon having their way and continually pray for a given thing just as Israel did with reference to eating flesh during the wilderness wanderings. They were not satisfied with the food which God had prepared for them; they therefore insisted that they have flesh added to their diet. God granted their petition but gave them leanness of soul (Ps. 106:15). This seems to be one of the methods that God has of punishing people when they insist upon having their way and refuse to walk in the paths of the Lord.

It is hard for us, with the scanty data which we have, to determine whether or not it was God's first plan for Hezekiah to pass on to his fathers. This investigation, however, brings up the question as to whether or not God has more than one plan for each individual's life. For instance, we may say that God has a "number one" plan for a certain person. If he accepts it as coming from the Lord and fits into that plan by surrender as he should, then all will be well in the highest degree for this one. On the other hand, if such a one refuses to accept this plan of God and insists on something which is foreign to the original plan, God may give him a "second best"—or even a "third best." Or He may give him a less honorable plan for his life. That such is the teaching of God's Word may be gathered from Proverbs 3:1,2.

"1 My son, forget not my law;
But let thy heart keep my commandments:
2 For length of days, and years of life,
And peace, will they add to thee."

Here we see Solomon urging one to obey the law of the Lord and to keep His commandments, for in the keeping of them life and years and peace are added to the individual. If, on the other hand, one refuses to be obedient to the Lord, then these added years will be subtracted and the life will be shortened. There are other passages which teach this great truth.

Let each one of us who knows God in Christ Jesus be satisfied with His first plan, which is always the best thing for us. At the time being we may not be able to see and understand the situation; but, when that which is perfect is come, we shall then know even as we are fully known and will see that at all times all things were working out for our good.

When the Lord announced that He would add fifteen years to the life of Hezekiah, He gave a sign whereby the king could be assured that the prophecy would be fulfilled. The sign was the going back of the shadow on the steps or dial of Ahaz. This seems to have been a sundial, which had been erected by Ahaz. It may have been a Syrian one, similar to the altar which Ahaz had seen in Damascus and which he had copied and set up at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Lord offered Hezekiah the choice of alternatives: Either He would cause the shadow to go forward ten steps, or cause it to go backward ten degrees. Hezekiah chose the latter. In accordance with this decision the Lord performed a miracle and caused the shadow to turn back ten steps. The going backward of the shadow was indeed a miracle. How can we explain this? Was there a refraction of the rays of the sun? Or did God throw the machinery of the universe in reverse, figuratively speaking, and cause the shadow to go backward? Is there some loss of time in the great chronological scheme

of the centuries? These are most difficult questions. There are some who think that there is evidence that this occurrence, together with that of the sun's standing still in the days of Joshua (Josh., chap. 10), can account for a lost day in the calendar. Some competent scholars are convinced of that fact. Knowing little of astronomy, although I took a brief course in that subject, I am unable to say.

If we are to take II Chronicles 32:31 and understand that the wonder which was wrought in the land of Palestine was a local affair and not one that affected the entire solar system, then the contention to which I have just referred cannot be maintained. It appears from the statement in Chronicles that the miracle was confined to the land of Palestine. Moreover, it may possibly have affected only the immediate region of the sundial since the statement in Chronicles confines the miracle to "the wonder that was done in the land."

Here is a case of miraculous intervention in the course of nature as it pertains to the recession of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz. We may reasonably believe that the phenomenon causing this going back of the shadow on the dial was known by the people in the land in order that they might be influenced by it.

As to how the Lord accomplished this wonder, no one can say. He is the author of the so-called laws of nature, a few of which we have a little knowledge. There doubtless are many and higher laws than those which we know and which the Lord could bring into action and produce that which to us is supernatural. If men who have studied the materials which enter into the construction, for instance, of an airplane can utilize, combine the various principles involved, and can bring about a result which nature unaided cannot accomplish, namely, the flying of a plane with a heavy cargo, then most certainly God, who is infinite and all-powerful, could take the various laws which He himself instituted, combine them, and bring about this marvel. To the one who recognizes the omniscience and omnipotence of God Almighty, such a miracle is as possible as anything that mortals may do. The infallibly inspired Word of God asserts that the miracle was performed; we believe it. Thus far we have examined the attitude that Hezekiah took, before God gave him the assurance that He would prolong his life for fifteen years.

The only writing which we have from Hezekiah is the poem found in verses 10-20 of our chapter. He wrote this upon his being restored to health. His restoration was the result of divine intervention.

In this poem he gives us his outlook upon the world when the Lord announced to him that his time to depart this life had drawn near. These reminiscences are found in verses 10-14. But in verses 15-20 he presented by the Spirit to us the great lessons of life, which he had learned by this experience.

In verse 10 he tells us that upon receipt of Isaiah's message he said that he was cut off out of the land of the living and that he would go down to the gates of Sheol in the noontide of his years. He began to rule when he was twenty-five years old and had reigned fourteen years; hence he was thirty-nine at the time when he was sick and the Lord restored him. The span of life was reduced in Moses' day from one hundred and twenty years to seventy or eighty (Ps. 90:10). Hezekiah could well say that he was being cut off in the noontide of his life and that he was being deprived of the residue of his years.

He spoke of going down into the gates of Sheol. Sheol is the place to which all departed spirits, righteous and unrighteous, went upon death, prior to the victory which our Lord won at the time of His death, burial, and resurrection. Since Christ won the victory, the righteous go immediately into His presence; but the wicked continue to go to Sheol, which seems to be in the center of the earth.

According to verse 11 Hezekiah declared that he, since he thought that he was going to die immediately, would not see Jehovah in the land of the living and that he would behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. These statements are clearly an echo of the hope which the Old Testament saints entertained with reference to the coming of

Jehovah in person to rule and reign upon the earth. In the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Job the ancient patriarch expressed his conviction regarding his knowing that his Redeemer lived and that He would stand upon this earth. But Job did not expect to see Him in his own natural lifetime, for he said that, after his skin, that is, his body, was destroyed, then without his flesh he would see God. The hope then that Job entertained was that he would see Messiah here upon this earth, but that he would not see Him in his own natural lifetime. Hezekiah was expecting the Messiah to appear in his own time; David, in various psalms, expressed the hope that God in the person of the Messiah would appear in his lifetime. Isaiah urged the people to wait patiently for Jehovah.

Just as the devout saints of the Old Testament hoped that God would come in the person of Messiah at any time and establish His reign upon the earth, so we of the Christian Dispensation are looking forward to the possibility of the Lord's descent from heaven to the air to raise the dead in Christ and catch up the living saints to be with Him from that time forth and forevermore. God did not tell the Old Testament saints that the Messiah definitely would come in their lifetime, but He left the question open in order that it might be a stimulant to them to live godly, consecrated lives. Finally, in the days of Daniel, the Lord specified in chapter 9 the time when Messiah would be cut off; and thus the Jews who believed his statement and understood the prophecy did not then expect the Messiah to appear in their lifetime, but to appear in time to be cut off at the end of the period of sixty-nine weeks (of years)—483 years.

When Hezekiah thought that he was going to die according to Isaiah's announcement—and before the Lord assured him that he would live fifteen years more, he compared himself to a shepherd's tent that is very easily removed and taken away. Then he likened his life to that of a piece of cloth on the weaver's beam which could be cut off at any time, even before it was completed. Life, so far as we know, is very uncertain. We are in good health today. We do not know when our summons may come. It is therefore wise for us to be prepared for the exchange of worlds.

According to verse 13 Hezekiah quieted himself during the night until morning with the thought that his situation was hopeless, that fate was against him, and that there was nothing which he could do. Then he expressed the conviction that with one fell stroke of God's judgment the end for him would come. Thus when he was in this frame of mind, he declared that he was like a swallow or a crane which did chatter, and that he mourned as a dove while his eyes failed looking upward. Then in the hour of desperation he called upon the Lord to be his surety, to be his Redeemer (vs. 14).

With verse 15, as stated above, Hezekiah now shows us the value of this wonderful experience to his soul. He therefore said:

"15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul."

In these words Hezekiah declared that God had spoken and that He had carried out that which He had promised. In other words, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God (Deut. 8:3). The Lord had promised to lengthen his life and had done it. By this action Hezekiah was really living. He had come to the point where he had surrendered all and was trusting God to be surety. Because of this experience which he had had, he declared that he would go the rest of his life walking softly before God. When the Lord deals with a man in the interest of his soul—and He always does this—and when He puts him through some grueling experience, he should take these matters seriously and walk softly before God from that time on.

In verse 16 Hezekiah declared, "O Lord, by these things men live; And wholly therein is the life of my spirit." These words interpret the trying experience through which he had just passed as a means whereby God had brought him into a new spiritual life; but he was not satisfied with remaining where he was at the end of this experience, for he wanted God to restore him fully and make him live the abundant spiritual life. This should be the desire of every heart and soul.

Everyone should have the experience mentioned by the Apostle Paul in II Corinthians 4:1, "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day."

In looking back over this special incident in his life, Hezekiah declared that it was for his peace that God had brought this experience to him. Moreover he realized that it was an act of love on the part of God in order that He might deliver him from the pit of corruption. Having his spiritual eyes opened, Hezekiah could see the love, mercy, and kindness of God in the entire experience. He realized that it had spiritual and eternal values connected with it. He had come to know God as his personal Redeemer and to be conscious of having all his sins forgiven. Thus he was granted perfect assurance. The same thing is true with reference to everyone who comes to know God in Christ Jesus. All who have accepted Him as personal Saviour have been regenerated, have been forgiven their sins, and the Holy Spirit has taken up His abode in them. It is indeed a wonderful thing to be saved and to be conscious of the completed transaction. To be saved and to know it is the source of the greatest satisfaction and encouragement to anyone.

Hezekiah appreciated the extension of his life by fifteen years, for then he could labor in the Master's cause as He had never done before. He could do this in the light of all eternity. Every day that God permits us to live is an extension of our life in a way, and we should appreciate this and live for God and for eternity. Life is very brief at the most. What we shall have in eternity depends upon what we are and do here. We are saved by the grace of God but are rewarded according to our works, and according to the spirit in which we serve.

Hezekiah did not want to go down to Sheol, where all the departed at that time went. His reason for this attitude was that those who go to Sheol could not praise God and had no immediate hope of being delivered. David expressed the same thought in Psalm 30:9. The same theme is discussed in Psalm 88:10,11. The picture of Sheol presented in the Old Testament is that of a rather gloomy, dismal place—even that portion of it to which the righteous went. When Christ, however, came from the tomb He brought certain ones out of Hades, and their bodies were raised and came forth out of their tombs after Christ was raised (Matt. 27:51-53).

In Isaiah 38:19 appears a statement which should grip the heart of every mother and father especially:

"The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: The father to the children shall make known thy truth."

Of course during our natural lives our chief business should be the praising of God and the doing of those things that will reflect glory and honor upon His name. All parents especially should praise God to their children from day to day. A family altar should stand in every home. Around it all should gather in the morning for the praise of God and the same order should prevail at the close of the day. Praise and worship are due the Lord. The redeemed of Jehovah should delight in magnifying and praising God because of His matchless grace which has been bestowed upon them.

"Jehovah is *ready* to save me: Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments
All the days of our life in the house of Jehovah" (vs. 20).

The Lord showed that He was ready to save Hezekiah and did so when he took Him as his surety. God is ready to save any and everyone today, who will come to Him. God loved the world to the extent that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth upon Him should not perish but have life everlasting. The name of every man, woman, and child throughout the entire world may be substituted in this verse without doing violence to it. God personally wills the salvation of every soul. If anyone is lost, it is not due to the fact that God has not loved Him and has not made all provisions necessary for his salvation. God will see that His truth gets to everyone, regardless of where he is or the circumstances, who hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

After we are saved we should sing God's praises all the days of our lives in the house of Jehovah. Of course, the house of Jehovah to which Hezekiah referred was none other than the Temple. The house of God today is the church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth: thus it should be the delight of every redeemed soul to attend the services of the church regularly and to join in with the rest of God's people in singing songs of praise and adoration to the Lord because of the wonderful salvation which He has granted to us.

From this brief survey of this marvelous song of Hezekiah we see that God caused Hezekiah to pass through the experiences narrated. Because of them he was brought to a saving knowledge of God and was assured of his salvation. He enjoyed a new life and a new outlook, took advantage of them, and lived accordingly. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the next chapter, he made a serious mistake. It was, let us believe, one of the head and not of the heart.

In verse 21 Isaiah tells us that he gave instructions that a cake of figs should be made into a plaster and laid upon the boil which had broken out upon Hezekiah. This simple home remedy was used, at least to a certain extent, in the restoration of Hezekiah to his health. There can be no doubt but that his healing was a miracle. Nevertheless the Lord works in conjunction with men oftentimes and effects cures. Some times Jesus healed people instantly. Then again He restored sight to the blind man by putting spittle upon his eyes and having him to go to the Pool of Siloam and to wash. Circumstances alter cases. God can use the faithful efforts of an honest, conscientious physician in restoring health to one of His children. Then again, in answer to believing prayer, apart from all medical aid or human assistance, God can and often does restore one of His children to perfect health in answer to believing prayer. Let us take the Lord at His word and let us avail ourselves of all that He has for us.

The Visit of the Ambassadors from Babylon

At this time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he had heard that he had been sick and had recovered. Ostensibly these letters were to congratulate Hezekiah upon his recovery to health and to inquire concerning the wonder which had been done in the land as we have already seen. The messengers feigned these purposes, but in reality they came to spy out the land and to acquire all the facts concerning the military strength and the strategic importance of the situation in Jerusalem. The Babylonians were planning at that time, as the sequel of the story shows, an offensive war against the Jews.

Hezekiah accepted the ambassadors in good faith and believed their story. It is quite likely that he felt rather flattered by receiving these letters and the present which was sent him. Being unsuspecting and feeling grateful and at the same time flattered that he had received such attention, Hezekiah opened up all his treasures of gold and silver and precious things and showed the ambassadors even the most secret things of the kingdom. In doing this, he made a fatal mistake. He failed to take this matter to God and ask for His guidance in respect to this most serious matter. We should profit by Hezekiah's mistake. We should take all matters to the Lord in earnest prayer, requesting that He guide and direct us as to what we should do, how we should proceed, and when we should act. Unfortunately too many of us are hasty and impulsive, rushing into things without due consideration and without first asking for wisdom from above. The Lord revealed to Isaiah what Hezekiah had done and sent him with a message to the king. In delivering it, the prophet was very diplomatic and elicited from the king the information concerning his visitors and what he had done. Hezekiah was candid, frankly stating everything that he had done. Thereupon Isaiah revealed to the king the seriousness of his blunder and the consequences which would follow; namely, that the kingdom of Judah should be overthrown and the flower of the population carried into captivity. At this time it was revealed that the southern kingdom also would go. This prophecy was made something like a hundred years before the event took place.

God overrules everything for the advancement of His cause, plans, and purposes. He uses the good deeds of men and also their mistakes and errors, weaving them into a fabric of providential occurrences for the carrying out of His beneficent plans among the nations. Of course, when the children of God are in perfect harmony with Him and do everything according to His will, their efforts will count most for the kingdom of God. Nevertheless, even their mistakes and the sins and transgressions of wicked men are in a similar manner worked into a chain of providential circumstances for the development of God's plan of the ages.

Isaiah's prophecy is followed by Hezekiah's statement to him:

"Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days" (39:8).

Hezekiah's attitude seemed to be deserving of censure. He was not, one may judge, so very much concerned about posterity as about himself and his own generation. This may be a hasty conclusion, but one naturally arrives at it by at least a superficial reading of Hezekiah's words.

But the rough edge of this criticism may be worn off by his first statement: "Good is the word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken." It is altogether possible that Hezekiah thought of the fatal mistake which he had made and was willing for God to take the situation in hand and deal with it as He chose. Furthermore, his statement in regard to there being peace and truth in his days may be interpreted as an expression of thanksgiving and praise that God by His mercy had seen fit to postpone the judgment. But let us not make any excuses for ourselves or for others in trying to justify failures.

With Hezekiah, however, we can say: "Good is the word of Jehovah," regardless of what it is. May we live for our own day and generation and also for the future of the people of God.

With the conclusion of Isaiah, chapter 39, we have reached the end of the first main division of the Book of Isaiah. With next month's installment we shall begin the second half of his prophecy.

JEWISH EVANGELIZATION COMMANDED

Chapter 40

- I. God's Special Message to Believers Regarding Jewish Evangelization (vss. 1,2).
- II. Two Responding Voices.
 1. Voice of Faith and Hope (vss. 3-5).
 2. Voice of Defeat and Discouragement (vss. 6-8).
- III. Instructions for Workers Among the Jews. (vss. 9-11).
- IV. The Message for Israel Explained.
 1. The Greatness of Messiah Creator (vss. 12-17).
 2. Messiah Jehovah, the Incomparable One (vss. 18-26).
 3. The Appeal and Promise (vss. 27-31).

Isaiah 40, judged from a literary standpoint, is recognized by many critics as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, documents ever written. This being the case, everyone who wishes to be well-educated should study this marvelous passage. Those, however, who wish to know the truth of God in order that they may conform their lives thereto should ask God to open their eyes in order that they might understand this great message.

When the chapter is analyzed, it is seen to fall into the following four divisions: God's special message to believers regarding Jewish evangelization; two responding voices; instructions to workers among the Jews; and the message for Israel explained. These divisions are shown in the accompanying outline.

In the first division, Isaiah speaks to a group of people. This fact is seen by his use of the plural pronoun, ye, in the exhortation, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." These words are directed by the Lord to a certain people who worship the God of Israel as their God. Thus Isaiah brought a message from the eternal God to this group, whom he urges to comfort His Chosen People. Obviously, the ones addressed are able to comfort others. The Lord would never command them to do that which they cannot accomplish by His help. We may believe that these who are addressed have a comforting, consoling message for His people. When I read this verse in the light of the entire revelation of God, I know the ones to whom the Lord here speaks. They are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have the comfort of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, and who are able to bring a message of comfort to those in distress.

That the people to be comforted, in this case, are the Jews is evident from the exhortation in the second verse, "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her ..." With this fact clearly in mind we can see immediately that the conclusion reached in the paragraph above—namely, that the ones urged to speak the comforting message to the Jews, are believers—is absolutely correct.

In these two verses, therefore, we see an exhortation given to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to evangelize the Jewish people. That this charge, which is the same as the one found in Isaiah 62:10-12, will be carried out is evident from Psalm 75:1. It reads as follows: "We give thanks unto thee, O God; We give thanks, for thy name is near: Men tell of thy wondrous works." This verse presents a vision of the time when Israel will be praising God because "His name is near: Men tell of thy wondrous works." She, jubilant and rejoicing over the prospects of Messiah's coming very soon, thanks God for this newly-discovered hope and declares that men have pointed out His wondrous works in her behalf. The entire nation will be evangelized in such a way as to convince it that the coming of the Lord is close at hand. Then a wave of praise and gratitude will sweep over that entire people and they exultantly will thank God; because they have learned the truth from

those who have been obedient to His exhortation that they (the believers in Christ) give them (the Jews) the message of the gospel. This same jubilant hope regarding Messiah's coming and exultation in it, on the part of Israel immediately before He does make His appearance, is seen in the marvelous prediction found in Isaiah 30:27-33. Notice especially that in verse 29 we see this same radiant hope expressing itself in joyful anticipation of Messiah's coming.

In Isaiah 40:1,2, God has given an exhortation to you and me, dear Christian friends, to speak this message of comfort to the heart of Israel. What shall we do about this? Are we obedient to this heavenly voice? or will we turn a deafened ear and thus lose a great reward? May God stir our hearts to do His will!

There are three things which we believers must proclaim in no uncertain sound to Israel. These are set forth in verses 1 and 2. The first item of the message is "that her warfare is accomplished." When Israel's warfare shall have been accomplished, there will be joy and rejoicing. She will not need therefore any message of comfort. On the surface there appears to be a contradiction; instead a blessed harmony is seen when all the facts are known. Every day we use language like this. When anyone is laboring at a great task and has accomplished practically all the work, he very frequently says that he is through. It is quite evident that he is absolutely and literally not through, but has *nearly finished* his job. This method of speaking is called the relative use of language. For example, Matthew tells us that all Jerusalem, Judaea, and the regions round about the Jordan went out and were baptized of John, confessing their sins. Nevertheless Luke declares that the Pharisees and the lawyers did not submit to John's baptism (Luke 7:29,30). The facts show that Matthew used his language not absolutely—but relatively. In the same way, the expression, "that her warfare is accomplished," is used relatively. The time yet remaining, when the message is given, for Israel to endure suffering will be negligible in comparison with the long centuries of her wanderings and the pogroms which she has suffered. In view of the facts, these messengers of the cross to Israel can, with all propriety, say that her warfare is accomplished—just a little time until Messiah comes and stops all wars (Ps. 46:9). Taking these facts into consideration, I am absolutely certain that the prophet's language was spoken to believers today, urging them, on the eve of the great Tribulation, to proclaim to Israel that the time is now very short and that she should accept her long-rejected Messiah.

The second item of the message is "that her iniquity is pardoned." Israel, like all other peoples, has many sins, but these evangelists are to tell her that her iniquity is pardoned. This statement seems to point to some definite, specific act of which the nation as a whole is guilty. When it is viewed in the light of related passages, it can mean nothing other than her national sin, which she committed in rejecting Messiah nineteen hundred years ago.

To tell Israel that her iniquity is pardoned is to explain to her the meaning of the cross and the blood of Christ, which is referred to in Zechariah 9:11: "As for thee also, because of the blood of thy covenant I have set free thy prisoners from the pit wherein is no water." The power of Satan and sin was broken at the cross. There, figuratively speaking, the "emancipation proclamation" of the liberation of all men from sin was issued. Men must, however, accept this free gift of God in order to enjoy its benefits. On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all the slaves in America. When the war closed in 1865 the colored man was given independence and citizenship. Some, however, of the slaves did not wish to accept this liberty but remained with their masters in perpetual slavery. That matter was optional with them. Christ, by the shedding of His blood, issued the Emancipation Proclamation to the entire race. He conquered death, hell, and the grave and brought forth life and immortality to light through the gospel. He has offered pardon and redemption to all men. Only when anyone accepts this grace, can he enjoy the liberty and the life, purchased on Calvary for him. In order that men might accept this redemption, others must tell them of it. God gives a special command, therefore, to believers at this present time, to declare the message of the cross, which alone can blot out Israel's national sin (and all others), to His Chosen People in order that they may repudiate it, accept the Messiah, be forgiven, and cleansed.

In the third place, believers are to declare to her "that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins." Increased light brings added responsibility. What advantage has the Jew? Much in every way (Rom. 3:1,2). God created this nation by a biological miracle to show forth His glory (Isa. 43:1-7). Having received all the advantages conferred upon her, God holds her responsible for the proper use of all these gifts. Since therefore she has sinned against light, God will punish her double for her sins. This is asserted, not only by Isaiah in our passage, but by Jeremiah in 16:17,18. The missionaries to the Jews are, therefore, to explain to Israel why she has suffered as she has through the centuries and why she will yet endure untold agonies in the Tribulation. This exhortation embraces our unfolding to her God's providential dealings with her in the past and delivering to her the message with reference to the Tribulation as set forth, not only in the Old Testament, but especially in the Book of Revelation.

A person can only obey this injunction as he understands the great fundamentals of the same. It is, therefore, imperative that those who wish to obey the command of the Lord and to enjoy rich rewards throughout eternity prepare themselves to deliver this three-fold message adequately and convincingly. May the Lord enable us to do this and to give a reason to every man who asks regarding the hope that is within us (I Pet. 3:14,15).

In the second division of the chapter, we hear two voices responding to God's call to evangelize Israel. The first is one of faith and hope (verses 3-5); the second is one of defeat and discouragement (verses 6-8). There are many men of many minds. All do not respond alike. Some have hearts receptive to the truth and eyes to behold the right. As soon as truth is presented, they accept and react most favorably. Such is the attitude of the first voice which the prophet heard. The one crying is a herald to the people, announcing the approach of Jehovah who is King over all the earth. He calls upon the people to be ready to receive this one. When the language of verses 3-5 is compared with an ancient custom of the East, one sees instantly that the prophet was thinking of the preparation necessary for Messiah's advent in terms of that which was made in anticipation of an earthly monarch. For instance, when one king announced that he contemplated making a visit to another, his host would have a highway constructed from the border of his territory to his capital in order that his visiting friend might come in royal estate. This very thing was, I am told, done in 1898 when Emperor Wilhelm of Germany announced that he intended to visit Jerusalem. The Turkish authorities had a highway built from Jaffa to Jerusalem in order that the Kaiser might come in royal estate into the city of the Great King. A section of the wall of Jerusalem at the Jaffa gate was removed in order that he might ride into the city. This incident throws light upon the language which we are considering. The same thought relative to the preparation necessary for King Messiah's return is clothed in similar language (Isa. 62:10-12).

Who is the one calling, in Isaiah 40:3, upon the people to make this preparation? This one can be none other than the herald of King Messiah. The Jewish interpretation, which is scriptural, is that it is none other than Elijah the prophet; for in Malachi 4:5,6 appears a prediction that God will send Elijah the prophet before the face of the Lord in order to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to the children before the great and terrible day of Jehovah comes. Since the context of our passage is dealing with the second coming of Christ, we may be certain in concluding that this voice is none other than that of Elijah. Malachi's prediction assumes the destruction of the home life and the alienation of parents from children and children from parents among the Jewish people immediately before Messiah appears. Elijah, according to the prediction, will come to restore the family relationship lest Messiah come and smite the earth with a curse. This herald calls upon the people to make preparation for Messiah's advent. The passage, however, is quoted in Luke 3:4-6 and is applied to the ministry of John the Baptist. Isaiah's prophecy falls into the second class, which is discussed in my volume. *The World's Greatest Library Graphically Illustrated* under the caption, "How to Interpret Prophecy." It will appear immediately that this is a literal prediction plus a typical signification.

This prophecy has figurative language in it, but it stands for a reality. In making a highway for royalty, the ancients often cut down hills, filled in valleys, and made a level road for the visiting king. Since the prophet was thinking of the

coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords, he naturally spoke of the spiritual preparation in terms of the material labor that was necessary in preparing for a human monarch. This is very clear and needs no further explanation.

Since this marvelous sermon is addressed to believers who are commanded to give the truth to Israel, and since the prophet sees Elijah urging his brethren to make the necessary preparation in anticipation of Messiah's advent, we, who know God's plan for Israel and who recognize that the time for His coming is fast approaching, are to make preparation for His advent by giving this message to her. May every one who reads this book likewise catch the vision and do what he can to make this needed preparation.

The second voice heard in response to Isaiah's appeal is described in verses 6-8. This is a note of discouragement and defeat. The one uttering it is typical of a large class of people—even of many saved, regenerated persons. Their attitude is negative. They lack faith. They are near-sighted; although they are told what to cry and to whom to deliver their message, they still ask, "What shall I cry?" The reason for their taking this attitude is that, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness there of is as the flower of the field." They excuse their non-obedience by saying that the seasons come and go; the grass springs up, develops, fades, and passes away. Thus they complain that one generation goes and another comes. Time goes on. If you ask me to be specific, I would say that these people, though they might be born-again, do not believe in the study of the prophetic word and do not realize that we are living in the closing scenes of this age. Thus, they do not become excited over anything but wish to be left alone to pursue their own courses undisturbed. The study of prophecy disturbs the complacency of the disinterested.

To this class, the prophet replies that the grass does wither and the flower does fade, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; but hastily He reminds the people that the Word of our God shall stand forever. Although they do not wish to read and study the prophetic word and are unwilling to obey His command in regard to evangelizing Israel, the Lord will carry out His program just as it is written. Let us remember that He does not fulfill His predictions according to the speculations of men, but as they are written. The signs of the times indicate that we are in the closing scenes of this era. It is for us to be up and doing, serving God, in every way possible, especially in obedience to this matter of giving the gospel to His Chosen People.

The third division of Isaiah, chapter 40, is "Instructions for workers among the Jews." These are found in verses 9-11. This message is for those who are responsive to God's call to evangelize Israel. That this paragraph is addressed to Christian workers is evident from the command, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid." In the Common Version the translation is exactly the reverse and reads, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings," etc. But the marginal reading is the same as the text rendering of the American Standard Version. The Hebrew is capable of either of these translations. Thus, we must determine which accords with all the facts of this context in order to know which rendering we should choose. When we remember that what we have already seen in verses 1-5 is addressed to those who have the message of comfort, and who are commanded to give it to the Jews, we see that the text of the Revised Version is the only possible one. In view of these facts, I have put as the heading of the third section, "Instructions for Workers among the Jews."

The worker in Israel who brings the good tidings from the Lord is not to be timid; he is exhorted in these words, "lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid." A person should know his message: he should know how to deliver it—and should do it with confidence, conviction, strength, and power in order that it might reach the heart of the hearers. He is to preach with no uncertain sound, speaking the truth in love.

The worker is to cry to the cities of Judah, to the daughter of Zion—the Jewish people. The gist of the message is, "Behold, your God!" The word rendered "behold," as Professor Franz Delitzsch has well pointed out, calls attention to something in the future. Thus these missionaries are to direct Israel's attention to the future. But what is central in their

message? This question is answered in the next verse: "Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one." Here the messengers are to tell Israel that the Lord Jehovah will come as their Deliverer. In Psalm 45:3-5 we see the Lord coming as a warrior—victorious over all enemies. The very word used by Isaiah was employed by the psalmist. It occurs again in Isaiah 9:6 in connection with God and is rendered "mighty God." I can just as accurately render it "God the Mighty Warrior." From this verse, therefore, we see that God urges believers to evangelize Israel before the Messiah's advent and to tell her of His coming as a warrior. Clearly, this ministry is to be conducted before He comes, because the messengers are to tell Israel that He will appear in this role.

On the other hand, we are sometimes told by earnest students that we are not to evangelize the Jews; for they, according to this erroneous hypothesis to which I have already called attention, are to be converted by looking upon the Lord personally at His return. This theory is contrary to the plain instructions in this passage regarding Jewish evangelization.

Furthermore, the messengers to Israel are to inform her that, when the Lord Jehovah comes as a mighty warrior, He will take the reins of government and will rule. From other passages we know that He will reign from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth, and of the increase of His government there shall be no end upon the throne of David (Isa. 9:7). When He returns in fulfillment of this passage, He will come with His reward and recompense. Then He, the Good Shepherd, will tend His sheep according to verse 11. This flock can be none other than the faithful remnant which survives the Tribulation, after the apostate portion of the nation has been swept away by the judgments of the great Tribulation.

In verses 12-31 the prophet elucidates his meaning and enlarges upon his description of Messiah, whose coming these messengers are to announce. The greatness of Messiah is set forth in verses 12-17. Here He is represented as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. It was He who measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, meted out the heavens with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in balances. He was a great architect; He was a great builder—the great creator of the universe; He was the great chemist who compounded the elements in the proper proportions in order to make this universe what it should be. He is omniscient; therefore, He needs no one to instruct Him. He has all knowledge, and no one can counsel Him.

Furthermore, He is so very great that the nations are but as a drop in the bucket; in fact, they are accounted as dust on the balances. He is so very august that the country of Lebanon with its towering mountain peaks would be too small an altar, and all the animals which might be in the land are too few for an adequate sacrifice, and offering to Him.

The great Creator is the Messiah, whose coming the workers in Israel are to proclaim to the nation throughout the world. When we compare this passage with related ones, we see that the Creator of the universe is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-natal state. Knowing these facts, I have placed as the first heading under the fourth division, "The Greatness of Messiah Creator."

As a second heading under IV, I have selected the title, "Messiah Jehovah the Incomparable One." This mighty Creator is infinite in all His attributes; therefore it is inconceivable for one to make any image of Him. It is folly on the part of anyone to think that men with their limited, finite minds could conceive of any form by which to picture Him to others. It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers. It is He who stretches out the heavens as a curtain and spreads them out as a tent in which to dwell. He raises up princes and brings them to naught. He dethrones kings. He abases the judges of the earth. He overrules and controls the affairs of men.

This very Creator, whose coming the works are to announce to Israel, is the one who created the starry heavens above and whose power keeps each of these bodies in its proper orbit. He calls them all by name, and, because He is so very powerful, not one of them is lacking.

The message to be delivered to Israel ends with an appeal in verses 27-31. Herein the prophet calls Israel's attention to the fact that this God is omniscient and omnipresent. She must believe Him. She must trust Him, even though she cannot understand and comprehend His existence and being. All of them must yield their lives to Him; they must give Him their hearts; they must follow Him. It is He who gives power to the faint; it is He who gives increased strength; it is He who, coming to Israel in her last great struggle, will, as she waits for His appearing, renew her strength, so that she shall mount up with wings as eagles; so that she shall run and not be weary; and may walk and not faint.

A SURVEY OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

As all students know, the Book of Isaiah naturally falls into two principal sections: the first part, chapter 1-39; the second half, chapters 40-66. This division is recognized by all students. Properly speaking, a discussion of this second half of the book should have been given prior to the exposition of chapter 40, which installment appeared in the last issue. I deferred the present discussion however until reaching chapter 41 because in it we find the first data which has led so many scholars to dissect the book and to tear it to pieces. In modern times, since rationalistic criticism has become dominant in the theological world, the Book of Isaiah is no longer considered the work of a single author—that is, by many scholars. Its unity has been called in question and proof has been sought far and wide to substantiate the thesis.

When the rationalistic critics began the dissection of the book, they attributed generally the first thirty-nine chapters to Isaiah, the son of Amoz, whose ministry fell in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. To the Great Unknown Prophet of the Exile they ascribed chapters 40-66. They did not attempt to name this great poet, author, and prophet. As criticism advanced, the rationalists continued their vivisection of the book and have come to the position that there were three different authors of the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah. Of course, according to their analysis, certain editors or redactors took the genuine work of Isaiah and the writings of these three unknown prophets of later dates and edited them, welding them together into the single unit as they appear in our Bible. Just as there are different strata of earth—one superimposed upon the other—so there are, according to the critics, different strata in the Book of Isaiah, each coming from a different periods, and out of various circumstances. Are these gentlemen correct in their analysis of the material before them?

In order to answer the question just asked, one must take a general survey of the entire book. After doing this, one should look at the special data to which attention is called as proof for a composite document. After this one should take a cursory view of the last twenty-seven chapters of the book. When one has accomplished all of this, one can arrive at but one conclusion; namely, that there is no justification for dividing the Book of Isaiah among different authors who lived at various times.

Chapter 1 is an indictment of the Jewish nation by the Prophet Isaiah. The first verse tells us that his labors fell in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Roughly speaking, his ministry was in the latter half of the eighth century before the Christian Era. In this first chapter is found the theme that is discussed so very completely in the latter half of the book (Isa. 1:26,27). The second division consists of chapters 2-4. Here the prophet began his sermon by giving us a marvelous picture of Jerusalem after it has been purged from all sins and is re-created the joy of the whole earth. In it we see King Messiah reigning as Sovereign of the entire world. The sermon concludes with a like description of the great millennial Jerusalem and earth. The material intervening—2:5-4:1—tells of the terrific judgments of the great day of Jehovah, the great Tribulation Period, during which Jerusalem will be purged from all her sins and the Jewish people converted to their Messiah.

In chapter 5 we read Isaiah's sermon on the vineyard of Jehovah. The dominant note of this message is that of judgment because of sin and the final purging of all evil from the people of Israel, when God permits all nations to gather against Jerusalem to battle in the day of the Lord.

In chapter 6 appears the call of Isaiah to his prophetic ministry. In preparation for this call, the prophet was granted a vision of the great millennial Temple in which our Lord will be worshipped during the Kingdom Age. Thus this brilliant ray of the glorious hope of Israel's future is set forth in the beginning of this marvelous call of the prophet to his ministry.

Another indisputable fact strengthens the conclusions thus far drawn. An examination of the calls of various prophets shows that in the circumstances connected with said calls are reflected the dominant characteristics of the ministry of each prophet. For instance, in the Lord's calling Jeremiah to His service, He spoke to him saying, "I have this day set thee

over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). This statement, together with all the utterances which the Lord made to him at that time, reflects the situation with which the prophet would be confronted during his entire ministry. Speaking in ecclesiastical terms, one would say that Jeremiah was to be a spiritual iconoclast—he was to pronounce judgments and woes upon, not only the Jewish people, but also upon all nations. An examination of his entire book shows that practically all of his messages—chapters 30-33 are exceptions—were but an expansion of this thought. A glance at the call and commission of Ezekiel shows the same thing. If one will carefully examine Ezekiel, chapters 1-3, one will see that the prophet was to be a messenger announcing "lamentation, and mourning and woes." While Ezekiel did sound some joyous notes, as for example in chapters 40-48, the general trend of his preaching was that of woe and calamity. His discourses were therefore largely found in their embryonic form in his call and commission. The same principle holds true with reference to Isaiah's call. An examination of chapter 6 shows that the prophet was given a vision of our Lord in His millennial splendor, reigning over the earth when the glory of God shall encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea. At the same time the Lord revealed to him that he would encounter great difficulties in the opposition offered by the godless ones of the nation. A careful examination of Isaiah, as we have already seen, reveals the fact that in the preaching of this prophet there were unfolded constantly the glories of Messiah's future reign. At the same time there were somber notes sounded by him. Thus when the Book of Isaiah is studied in its entirety, one sees unfolded before his vision the very thoughts that were contained in the call. These facts being true, one sees that the Book of Isaiah is simply the unfolding of the message of the call and is therefore a perfect literary unit.

Isaiah's call occurred in the year that King Uzziah died. Thus the first sermons found in the book were preached before his official call to his ministry.

The next section of the Book of Isaiah is known as "The Book of Immanuel" and covers 7:1-12:6 inclusive. In this section King Messiah looms very largely on the horizon. The portion comprising 7:1-9:7 was probably written in the beginning of the reign of Ahaz. The section, chapters 9:8-12:6, was probably spoken in the first part of Hezekiah's reign—after the sixth year when Samaria fell. In this "Book of Immanuel" there crops out in almost every chapter the glorious hope of Messiah's appearance upon earth, of the establishment of His reign of righteousness here, and of the glory of the Lord which will at that time encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea. In other words, in this section of the book the prophet now and again speaks of the glory of the future of Jerusalem and the Jewish people as he does in the latter half of the book.

Isaiah, chapters 13-23 constitutes "The Book of the Burdens of the Nations." This begins with an oracle against Babylon and concludes with one against Tyre. Throughout this portion of the record, some of which was written in the year that King Ahaz died (14:28), shines forth brilliantly the hope of Jerusalem's great future under King Messiah. For instance, see 14:1,2; 16:5; 17:7; 18:7; and 19:23-26.

The next section of the book, consisting of chapters 24-27, is "The Little Apocalypse of Isaiah," which deals with the world situation in the end time. In this portion we see a world city which dominates the life of the peoples of earth. When this "Little Apocalypse" is read in the light of related passages, one comes to the conclusion that this world city is none other than Babylon, rebuilt in fulfillment of such predictions as are contained in Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14, and Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51. On the other hand, we see in the song which will be sung in the land of Judah in the Tribulation (26:1-19) a reference to the great millennial city of Jerusalem. The Jews of Palestine, during the Tribulation, will learn about this marvelous city which Abraham by faith saw and will likewise by faith rejoice in anticipation of its being established upon the earth. Throughout this section of the Book of Isaiah we see that the prophet was carried to the loftiest heights and sang of the glories of Israel's future as is done in the latter half of Isaiah.

Throughout the next section of the Book of Isaiah, chapters 28-35, which were spoken probably in the first part of Hezekiah's reign before the critical fourteenth year of that monarch, we constantly see pictures of the millennial glory of the Messiah. In every sermon of this section, with an exception or two, the prophet began to discuss the local situation of his day or of that of the immediate future and then hastened toward the end of this age to sing of the glories yet to come.

In the last section of the first half of Isaiah, chapters 36-39, appears the historical record of the events of the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. The material appearing here is largely historical. There is, however, gleaming through all this record of the past, a ray of hope expressed, although Hezekiah realized that he could not enjoy, in his own lifetime, seeing Messiah appear in all of His glory (38:11).

Beginning with chapter 40 and running to the end of the book, we read of the glorious vision of Jerusalem and of Israel's future. In all his sermons Isaiah invariably spoke of the future glories. These factors we shall see a little later in this discussion.

There are thus unity and oneness in evidence throughout the Book of Isaiah. Naturally, after the prophet had discussed, pro and con, the world situation of his day and also that of his immediate future, he took up the discussion of the events of the end of the age as we have already seen—matters of judgment and of glory—even in the first half of his book. He, in this section, had thoroughly disposed of the matters pertaining to the dark side of the picture and at the same time had painted in the most brilliant colors the future of Messiah's reign. Naturally, therefore, in the latter half of his book, he rose to exalted heights reached by few other prophets, in describing the glories of Messiah and His reign. If I should speak in terms of a musical number and the organ upon which it is played, I would say that from the very beginning of the composition throughout the first half there are interspersed measures of the most glorious harmonies concerning Israel's great future. In the second half these frequent measures, setting forth the glories of Messiah, swell into a vast "Hallelujah Chorus." The prophet-poet here pulled out all the stops of his organ and sent forth the mightiest volume of melody concerning Messiah and His marvelous kingdom that has ever come down through the corridors of time to the present day. The Book of Isaiah therefore may be thought of as an oratorio, the masterpiece of a musical genius. Messiah and His redemptive work, not only for Israel but for the whole world, are indeed the overtones, even in those sections that deal with material matters of the past. Whereas they are the harmony of the measures interspersed here and there in the first half, they become the melody and the harmony of the rhapsodies of Zion redeemed of the second half.

In view of the unity of Isaiah, which we have just seen, why do the critics dissect the book and apportion it out to various imaginary authors? Is it that they are blinded to the facts that are patent to it and are lying on the very surface of the book itself, and that proclaim the unity of the book?

The answers to these questions lie in several directions. The critics' reason for being unable to see these glorious truths primarily is attributable to their disbelief in miracles and the fact of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The theory which one holds regarding inspiration will determine absolutely and definitely one's interpretation of the Oracles of God. If one rejects the scriptural teaching of the absolute, infallible, and inerrant inspiration of the sacred writers, the Book has a certain message for him. Its value has been reduced from one hundred per cent to possibly five per cent, more or less. If a person, however, holds to a loose theory of inspiration, believing that the authors of the Scriptures enjoyed even a heightened degree of poetical inspiration—as is all too prevalently believed—the Scriptures still have very little value to him. On the other hand, if one has a heart conviction, which is based upon unimpeachable historical evidence, that the prophets of God were absolutely, inerrantly, and infallibly inspired as they transmitted to us their revelations from God, the message has the highest possible value and is accorded the place of absolute and unquestioned authority from God.

Those, however, who do not hesitate in their thinking and teaching to dissect the Book of Isaiah and to apportion it to imaginary authors and redactors do so upon the assumption that the book is practically of human origin, written by men of their own day, who were limited by the meager knowledge of the time. Thus these men feel that they are qualified to dissect the book, to reconstruct the entire historical situation, and to tell us what the original authors meant. This process and manner of dealing with the Sacred Word is no better illustrated than in the case of the Book of Isaiah. Whenever it is thus treated, the beauty of the book is destroyed, the picture is blurred to almost the vanishing point, the power of the message is reduced to a minimum, and the message itself is distorted, modified, and changed to the point of being unrecognizable. These are some of the fatal results of the destruction of the unity of the book and its dissection, which are brought about by the disbelief in the absolute and infallible inspiration of Isaiah, the author.

A second reason, akin to the one just discussed, is that Cyrus is mentioned by name in 44:28 and is undoubtedly referred to in 41:2 and 25 and that the work which he would accomplish in restoring Israel from Babylonian captivity to the homeland is described in 44:28-45:7, 11-13. The rationalistic critics, rejecting the idea of inspiration, declare that Isaiah could not have written these sections in which Cyrus and his work appear; because, according to their theory, no man could see that far into the future. They therefore speak frequently of the "Great Unknown Prophet of the Exile." By this indefinite imaginary person they mean to tell us that some prophet lived in Israel at the time when Cyrus stepped forth upon the international scene and began the conquest of the then-known world. We are told by these gentlemen that the established policy of Cyrus was to restore deported peoples and to send along with them their gods to their ancestral homes. When this great unknown prophet saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears what Cyrus was doing, he proceeded to write these prophecies. These conclusions he reached by natural reasoning and not by the infallible inspiration of the Spirit of God.

In reply to this position let me say that we can take, for instance, the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the nations (chapters 13-23), especially those regarding Egypt, Moab, and Tyre, then visit those lands and see with our own eyes what has come to pass and how the fulfillment has been accomplished literally. When we realize these things and recognize the fact that the Prophet Isaiah could look into the future—for centuries—and describe accurately the conditions that would prevail in certain countries, we can see how he could look forward approximately two hundred years and foretell the existence of Cyrus and his being used of God to send the captives back to their own land after the period of the Exile. According to I Kings 13:2 God, through one of His servants, foretold the birth of King Josiah approximately three hundred and fifty years. In view of these facts there is no need for our rejecting the plain surface meaning of these predictions and forcing upon them unnatural connotations which are not justified by a single particle of evidence.

Akin to the line of thought just presented is the further assertion by the critics that the outlook of the second half of Isaiah is that of the return of the captives from exile. In answer to this position I readily admit that in chapters 41, 44, and 45 the return from Babylonian captivity is clearly presented. But to say that the outlook of these chapters is the restoration from Babylon is to distort the record, to ignore facts, and to force upon them an unnatural meaning. For instance, in the first place where Cyrus is alluded to (41), the prophet in the first seven verses foretells the restoration of Israel to her land from the Babylonian captivity. But in verses 8-16 he leaps forward to the final regathering of Israel from her world-wide dispersion and her ultimate restoration to the land. In verses 17-20 the great miracles which will attend the final regathering of Israel and the lifting of the curse from the earth are discussed. Then the prophet, speaking in this message of the restoration from Babylon and then leaping to the final regathering and restoration of Israel in the end time, was following the "law of double reference," which is employed throughout the prophetic word. This same law is brought into play both in the oracles concerning Cyrus and the return from Babylonian captivity and the blending of it with the final restoration of Israel as seen in chapters 44 and 45. In view of these facts it is incorrect to say that the outlook of the second half of Isaiah is different from that of the first part. As we have seen in our cursory survey of the entire book, the prophet

often dealt with present conditions, then moved out into the future a little way, described conditions which he saw would develop, and finally blended these predictions with prophecies that are to be fulfilled in the end time.

The matter of a progressive unfolding of the future is characteristic of all portions of the Book of Isaiah. It is therefore incorrect to say that the outlook of the second portion is different from that of the first half.

The critics, having dissected the book and having constructed a false outlook for the second half of the book, attempt to bolster their false thesis by asserting that the doctrines are different, that the general conception in the two sections vary, and that the diction and style of the two sections indicate positively different authors. A careful and critical study of the entire book dispels this hypothesis as purely imaginary and contrary to the facts. When all the data is studied carefully, by one who is not biased by a theory but who wants truth and nothing but the truth, all of the supposed incongruities, inconsistencies, varieties, and differences vanish into thin air.

An Analysis of the Second Half of Isaiah

HAVING looked briefly at the hypothesis concerning the supposed authors of the Book of Isaiah and having in the briefest way called attention to facts which contradict the theory, we are now in a position to approach the second half of Isaiah more particularly in order to prepare ourselves for this further study of the book.

As is well known to all scholars, the second half of Isaiah falls into three divisions, each consisting of nine chapters: (1) chapters 40-48; (2) chapters 49-57; (3) chapters 58-66. The first section ends with the statement, "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the wicked" (48:22). The second portion ends with the same refrain (57:21); and the third division ends with the picture of a miniature hell (66:24).

The first section of this second half contains seven sermons:

1. Jewish evangelization commanded (chap. 40);
2. A challenge to idolaters and idols (chap. 41);
3. Messiah's redemptive career (42:1- 43:13);
4. Israel's future deliverance and establishment in the favor of God (43:14-44:5);
5. The folly of idolatry (44:6-23);
6. Israel's restoration from Babylon and its foreshadowing her final restoration (44:24-45:25);
7. The final overthrow of Babylon, the world-city, by Messiah at His second coming (chapters. 46-48).

As has already been noted, in this section the prophet looked forward to the return of the exiles from Babylon to their own home under the decree to be issued by Cyrus, which restoration foreshadowed, in dim outline at least, the final and complete restoration of Israel in the end time. Thus the return of the captive exiles to their homeland figures largely in the picture presented in chapters 41-45; but in chapters 46-48 the prophet foresees Babylon rebuilt and recognized as the mistress of the kingdoms of the world (47:5), which is to suffer the fate expressed in these words: "But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood; in their full measure shall they come upon thee, in the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments" (47:9). Hence the call goes forth for the Jews who will be living in Babylon at that time to go forth from her and not perish in her destruction (48:20).

The second section of the latter half of Isaiah—chapters 49-57—breaks up into six messages:

1. Messiah's glorious return and reign in Jerusalem (chap. 49);
2. A portrait of Messiah, the Servant of Jehovah (chap. 50);
3. A triple call to Israel to give heed to the message and a dual call to her to arise and accept Messiah (51:1-52:12) ;
4. The suffering Servant of Jehovah (52:13-54:12);
5. Zion glorified in the Millennial Kingdom (chap. 54);
6. A clarion call to Israel of the end time to accept her Messiah (chaps. 55-57).

In this second section of the latter half of the Book of Isaiah, the restoration from the Babylonian captivity has disappeared. The prophet is looking out into a different future and foretells the glories of Messiah. For instance, in chapter 49 he assumes the first coming of Messiah as an accomplished fact and devotes his attention to the events connected with His second advent. He devotes much time to the thought that God will never forget His promises to Zion, but will fulfill them literally at the correct time. In chapter 50 we see a life-size portrait of King Messiah at His first coming. Our prophet portrays Him during His personal ministry when He was in the shadow of the cross (vss. 4-9); but in the beginning of the chapter (vss. 1-3) he looks beyond Messiah's earthly ministry and sees the Jewish people in rejection. In chapters 51 and 52 is found the final call to Israel to accept her Messiah. In that matchless passage—52:13-54:12—we see the sufferings of Messiah as we observe them nowhere else in prophecy—unless it be in Psalm 22:21. Next, Zion, glorified, the joy of the whole earth, is presented in chapter 54.

Chapters 55-57 constitute one single sermon and must be studied as a unit. That these chapters are addressed to Israel of the end time becomes immediately apparent to one when one reads 56:1: "Thus saith Jehovah, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." The coming near of the salvation of God and the revealing of His righteousness are terms that refer to the second coming of Messiah when He does make bare His holy arm and reveal His delivering power and grace to His Chosen People, Israel. This interpretation is confirmed by the message of 57:1, 2 which tells us that at that time the righteous and godly men perish from the earth and are taken away from "the evil to come." As we approach the end of the age the number of truly good and righteous men decline at a very rapid rate. From these facts and others it is abundantly clear that this sermon (constituting chapters 55-57) is one message addressed to the last generation of Israel scattered among the nations.

The third and last general division of the Book of Isaiah consists of chapters 58-66. This section likewise falls into six messages.

1. A call to Israel to lay aside formalism in worship and to accept Messiah, her light, who will come and make Jerusalem the capital of the world (chaps. 58-60);
2. Another picture of Messiah's redemptive career (chap. 61);
3. A call to evangelize Israel (chap. 62:1-63:6);
4. A second version of Israel's penitential confession (chap. 63:7-64:12);
5. The Christian Dispensation, the Tribulation Period and the Millennium (chap. 65);
6. The Tribulation, Messiah's glorious coming, and Israel's final restoration (chap. 66).

The three chapters, 58-60, give us a picture of the spiritual and moral conditions existing in Israel in the very end of this age. The prophet being carried forward to that time, condemns the practices that will be the order of the day in Israel at this future period. He sees that the conditions in the nation will be deplorable and pleads for the people to accept their Lord and Messiah. This sermon concludes in chapter 60 with a prediction of King Messiah's personal return, the regathering of Israel, and the re-building of Jerusalem.

An outline of Messiah's redemptive career is set forth in most graphic terms in Isaiah, chapter 61. This passage should be studied in the light of Luke 4:16-30. In Isaiah 62:1-63:6 we hear the clarion call for the people of God today to evangelize Israel in order to prepare the way for the return of King Messiah. The second version of Israel's penitential confession—the original of which is found in 53:1-9 is given. These two passages should be studied in connection with each other. In the year 1944-plus (for we do not know the exact year) Israel will make this penitential confession and plead for Messiah to come. In Isaiah, chapter 65 we have clearly set forth the Christian Dispensation during which the Gentiles are coming to God while Israel is being rejected; the Tribulation Period, which will endure for seven years; and the great millennial reign of our Lord. This final section concludes with chapter 66, which also gives the Tribulation Period, Messiah's glorious return, the final regathering of Israel, and a picture of a miniature hell which will be in existence during the Millennium.

As one studies carefully these nineteen sermons, which compose the second half of Isaiah, examining those outbursts of eloquence and ecstasy interspersed throughout the first half of the book, one comes to the conclusion that there is no evidence justifying the dissection of the book. One who is familiar with the realm of ideas of the first half will find himself in the same atmosphere in the second half of the book. The only difference between the two halves is that, whereas there are predictions, threatenings, and judgments declared against the wicked and sinful—together with flashes of the coming splendor of Messiah scattered throughout the first half, the second half of the book is devoted entirely to the rhapsodies of Zion redeemed.

As we proceed to the exposition of this, one of the rich portions of the Word of God, let us study carefully, yes, microscopically—every sentence, giving attention to each word, its function in the sentence, and each sentence in its context. In other words, let us follow the Golden Rule of Interpretation which is: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise." If we do this, we shall have a clearer insight into the Word of God and shall have our souls enriched by this study. The oftener we can study the second section of Isaiah in our private devotions, the richer will the message become.

RHAPSODIES OF ZION REDEEMED

A CHALLENGE TO IDOLATERS AND IDOLS

Chapter 41

This sermon divides into two principal divisions: A challenge to idolaters (vss. 1-20); and, a challenge to idols (vss. 21-29).

A CHALLENGE TO IDOLATERS (vss. 1-20)

In verse 1 of this chapter the prophet summons the nations to come together in a mighty concourse with himself to consider the question of idolatry and the ability of the idols to make known things regarding the past history of the nations and to foretell future events connected with them. He wants the peoples of earth to put their wits together and to make out their case for idolatry. Hence he insists that no one hinder their making the case as strong as possible. This summons to such an international convention for the discussion of the question reminds one of the contest which Elijah had with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel as recorded in I Kings, chapter 18.

In his dramatic manner the prophet did not wait for the assembly to take place, but presented the case for the Almighty. He did this by asking the following questions: "Who hath raised up one from the east, whom he calleth in righteousness to his foot?" Isaiah looked out into the future and saw some great conqueror coming from the east whom, he declared, God had raised up for the carrying out of His plans and purposes. Moreover, he asserted that it is Jehovah, the God of Israel, who "giveth nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings." In fact, He subjects the nations before this conqueror "as the dust to his sword, as the driven stubble to his bow." Thus we see this victor in his whirlwind conquest as he subdues various nations under his mighty power. In his campaign he pursues his victims and passes by safely over roads and ways over which he had never gone before. According to military tactics today, the general staff of an army knows the terrain over which it expects its armies to march and where they will make their stand. Not so with this conqueror. He invades new territory without any map, chart, or advance information from an intelligence service. Nevertheless, he is successful in all his attempts.

Why is this leader so very successful and meets neither rebuffs nor setbacks? The answer to this question is found in the query and the answer thereto given in verse 4: "Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I, Jehovah, the first, and with the last, I am he." The solution to the whole problem is that the Eternal God who sees and knows all things from the beginning, and who has a plan and purpose which runs through the centuries is the one who, with His unseen hand, is guiding the onward march of this great eastern conqueror. According to this verse God planned and charted the course of history and the movement of the nations from the beginning. The beginning of what? The beginning of creation, for there could be no beginning of eternity in the past. This statement is in accord with others here and there in the Scriptures that attribute to the Almighty a planning and a purposing regarding the course of history before the creation of the universe, which part of eternity is called "the beginning."

The Almighty existed throughout all eternity of the past—prior to the creation of the world—and was "the first." Moreover, He marches steadily forward throughout that part of eternity known as "time" and will be here in all the plenitude of His power when the material heavens and earth, which are now, pass out of existence.

According to this passage, then, the nations with their armies, in their great conquests and movements back and forth, are simply carrying out the prearranged plan and purposes of the Almighty. While we recognize this truth, let us

remember always that man is a free moral agent and that the Lord never coerces anyone's will, but permits him to exercise his own free choices (cf. Isa. 10:5-12).

Let us keep in mind that Isaiah, in his challenge to the idol-worshippers, simply foretells, in this prophecy, that God is going to raise up one from the east whom He will prosper and cause to carry out His prearranged will. But at this point of time, he does not give us the name of this future conqueror. He does this, however, in another discourse—uttered later on—as we shall see in our study of chapter 45 of this book.

In verses 5-7 the prophet sees the consternation that is caused by the rapid and triumphal advance of this conqueror, as he goes from victory to victory, subduing the nations in the path of his onward march. In their mad frenzy and in a vain effort to stem the onrushing tide of foreign aggression, the nations feverishly order the manufacture of more idols of wood and stone in order that these created gods might deliver them from the impending danger. Thus the prophet sees the carpenter and the goldsmith—and others—engaged in the manufacture of more idols, encouraging one another concerning the excellency of his craftsmanship in bringing these gods into existence.

To us who have the light of the Word of God and the illumination of the Spirit in regenerated hearts, idols are nothing but the creation of man's hands. At the same time, however, we know from Psalm 106:34-38 that idolatry is backed by demonism. At the same time we know, that the actual idols which the nations worship are naught and are impotent. For a fine description of them see Psalm 135:15-18.

When we read this prediction concerning this one whom God, according to Isaiah, raises up from the east and leads on in his triumphal conquest, we do not see the purpose which the Almighty has in view in doing this. In the sermon consisting of Isaiah 44:24-45:25 we learn that His purpose in raising up this one, who is none other than Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king, was that he might restore Israel from captivity in Babylon after He will have accomplished His plan in sending them into exile. Concerning the full details of this matter, we shall learn when we reach the discussion of this latter sermon.

In Isaiah 41:8-20 the prophet is carried forward to the end of this age and sees God regathering Israel from her international dispersion and restoring her to her own land. This method of describing the restoration from Babylon and then blending it with the future world-wide regathering of Israel is common to all the prophets. In their speaking thus, they were following what is known among Bible students as the "law of double reference." Like the stereopticon which gives the dissolving effect in blending one picture into another, the prophets often blended descriptions of events similar in nature but removed from each other by long intervals. Hence the description of the work of Cyrus in restoring Israel after the Babylonian captivity fades into the prophecy of God's regathering Israel to her land in the end time.

In verses 8 and 9 we have this statement: "But thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend, 9 thou whom I have taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called from the corners thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away ..." We here meet the expression, "Israel, my servant," for the first time in Isaiah. It has three connotations, which are to be learned from the facts of each context in which it appears. In this one the circumstances show that the prophet was speaking of Israel, scattered among the nations, that is to be gathered back into the land of Palestine and restored to fellowship with God. This is the faithful remnant of Israel of the end time, but in 42:1-4 we have another servant passage. An examination of the quotation in the light of the longer context here shows that this one is none other than the Messiah of Israel; but in 44:18-22 we have the word servant used in its broadest signification. Here, according to the facts of the context, it signifies the entire nation of Israel. In view of this threefold usage of our term, we must examine the facts of each context to determine its particular meaning in a given case.

That the servant of Isaiah 41:8 is the faithful remnant is seen from the fact that she is "taken hold of from the ends of the earth, and called from the corners thereof ..." To these the Lord gives the assurance that they should not fear

because He is with them and will give all necessary assistance to them in order that they might survive the ordeals through which they are passing. By some this passage has been referred to as embracing the entire nation of Israel, but this interpretation cannot be correct because these who are thus designated as the servant are those whom God regathers and restores to the land of the fathers, and whom He assists, protecting them from all harm.

We should note that God promises assistance with "the right hand of my righteousness." This expression shows that all which is done in connection with their restoration is in accordance with the principles of God's righteousness. According to verses 11 and 12 all those that are incensed against Israel—the anti-Semites and the persecutors of the Jews—are to be put to shame and confounded. They shall, according to this promise, be brought to nothing and shall perish. After the judgments of that time shall have spent their force, the persecuted remnant of Israel will look for her enemies, but they will not be found, because they will have been blotted from the face of the globe. They will in reality be brought to naught.

In assuring her of this aid, the Lord reiterates the fact that He is Israel's God. He revealed Himself to the nation as He has done to no other people. Throughout the Prophets God speaks of Himself as the God of Israel. Realizing the impotency of the faithful remnant of the end time, the Lord speaks of it as "thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel." Although they will be as helpless before their enemies as a worm under the foot of a man, the Lord guarantees that He will help them, He being their "Redeemer ... the Holy One of Israel." Although they will have no strength of their own nor any ability to stand against their enemies, the Lord will make them into "a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth." Being thus strengthened, they will "thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff." That is, they will, by divine strength and assistance, be able to be victorious in their conquest against their enemies. In the ancient East, as at present, the threshing of the grain was done with a threshing instrument. After this operation the wheat was separated from the chaff by the wind that blows the chaff away. Thus God says that He will do with this faithful remnant in His protecting it and destroying its enemies. The Lord therefore calls upon Israel to rejoice in this fact and to glory in the Holy One of Israel.

In verses 17-20 Isaiah makes known to us the awful conditions that will exist at the time of the great Tribulation when Israel is to be delivered. From other passages we know that there will be great droughts that will cause famines during that time of unparalleled distress.

There will be a scarcity of water as well as food. But to "the poor and needy" who seek water but do not find any because of these judgments, the Lord will give drink miraculously. He therefore assures them that He will answer them and will not forsake them. According to verse 18 He will "open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." There will appear in the wilderness "a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

Following this miracle of providing water for the earth, the Lord will place in the wilderness "the cedar, the acacia, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree." He will "set in the desert the fir-tree, the pine, and the box tree together." In other words, the prophet is here speaking of God's lifting the curse from the earth and restoring Edenic conditions everywhere.

When this is done, saved Israel, as well as the peoples of earth, will realize that the Lord is the one who performs this miracle and that it is an act of creation by His own omnipotent hand.

A CHALLENGE TO IDOLS (vss. 21-29)

After having spoken directly to the idolaters and having challenged them to reveal the future as he does, Isaiah then addresses the idols, as we see in verses 21-29. That he is, in this section, speaking to them is evident from the statement in verse 23: "Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together."

To these dumb idols he throws out the challenge that they produce their cause. Isaiah is not doing this upon his own responsibility; he is speaking as the ambassador of Jehovah, the Self-Existent and Eternal One. Although Jehovah is the Almighty, He declares in this connection that He is "the King of Jacob." At various times in the exposition of Isaiah, I have had occasion to call attention to the fact that the word *Jehovah* has a fourfold significance, which is based upon the correct translation of Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Gods is Jehovah a Unity." In certain passages the word, Jehovah, refers to the Trinity; in others, to Jehovah the Father; in still others, to Jehovah the Son; and in other connections, to Jehovah the Holy Spirit. The facts of each context must be studied carefully in order to determine which of the four meanings this word has in a given case. The facts, however, are not always sufficiently clear to lead us to a dogmatic position in identifying the one meant. In this case, however, the term seems to refer to Jehovah the Son since He, as we learn from many other passages, is the King of Israel who will reign in Zion (Zeph. 3:14-17).

This King of Jacob calls upon the idols to bring their strong reasons which prove their existence and their demand for the worship of men. Then He asks them to bring forth and to declare future things—what shall happen; also He urges them to declare the former things—things that have been in the past, that have been foretold, and that will develop into things in the future. This line of thought is demanded by the words, "Declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them." Life is a series of causes and effects. The roots of our present civilization lie far back into the dim distant past. Isaiah recognizes this fact and therefore calls upon the gods to reproduce the records concerning past events and to show the developments of history in order that they might understand the things that are to come. All events are moving along lines which converge toward the final consummation of all things.

If these idols are unable thus to meet this challenge, the prophet calls upon them to show things to come: "Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods ..." Of course they could not utter prophecies, being nothing but stocks and stones. But we do know from other passages that demons do have the ability to tell some things in the future. They can see certain things in a limited and partial manner. This fact has been demonstrated time and time again. But for them to utter crystal-clear oracles, which can prove their knowledge of the future, is an impossibility with them. In regard to consulting spirits and resorting to the occult world, let me say that God has uttered the fiercest possible denunciation against such things.

According to verse 24 the prophet declares concerning idols, "Ye are of nothing, and your work is of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you."

Still addressing the gods, the prophet declares, for the Almighty, saying, "I have raised up one from the north, and he is come; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon my name: and he shall come upon rulers as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay." This verse undoubtedly refers to the same one of whom the prophet speaks in verse 2, but whom he does not in this sermon call by name. As stated above, Isaiah gives his name in a later sermon which begins with chapter 44, verse 25. From it we learn that this one from the east was none other than Cyrus. Neither the idols nor the idolaters could tell the name of this conqueror. But Isaiah, by the knowledge of God, foretells his name by more than a hundred years.

This passage speaks of this conqueror as coming from the east. Persia was due east of Palestine; yet his approach to Palestine was from the north because in going from the east ancient armies had to march north-westward up through Mesopotamia and then down in a southwesterly direction via Damascus into Palestine. The armies therefore were represented as coming from the east and at the same time coming from the north. This bit of information concerning the situation harmonizes these seeming contradictions.

In verse 26 the prophet declares that there were none of the idols which foretold that there would be such a conqueror coming from the east. To emphasize this thought he declared, "Yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that showeth, yea, there is none that heareth your words."

In verse 27 the prophet sees one coming from the east to Zion, making an announcement of glad tidings to her. Here are his words: "*I am the first that saith* unto Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings." The words, "Behold them," refer to the returning exiles. The prophet sees the exiles leaving Babylon, trudging the weary way back to the land of their fathers. Isaiah therefore was the first official spokesman that foretold the return in this dramatic way of the exiles from Babylon.

The prophet concludes his sermon by saying that when he looks around there was no one who would take counsel; there was no one of the idols who could answer, nor were there any of the idolaters who would answer a word. Finally, he declares, in the closing statement, "Behold, all of them, their works are vanity *and* nought; their molten images are wind and confusion." Idol-worshippers are blinded by the god of this world. They cannot see the truth in regard to the existence of the Almighty, nor the facts regarding the messages of God's prophets.

MESSIANIC TIMES ACCORDING TO ISAIAH 42:1-43:13

- I. The Prophet's impersonation of God the Father in calling Israel's attention to the Son (42:1-4).
- II. The Prophet as the Father's representative delivers special message to the Son when He is in the shadow of the cross (vss. 5-8).
- III. Announcement of fulfillment of the "former things"—first coming and man's redemption—and the coming of "new things"—world revival (vss. 9-13).
- IV. The second coming of Christ (vss. 14-17).
- V. Call to Israel as a nation to repent (vss. 18-22).
- VI. Call to individual Hebrews to repent (vss. 23-24).
- VII. Promise to the faithful remnant (Isa. 43:1-13).

THE PROPHET'S IMPERSONATION OF GOD THE FATHER IN CALLING ISRAEL'S ATTENTION TO THE SON (Isa. 42:1-4)

In Isaiah 42:1—43:13 we have one of the grand panoramic views of *Messianic Times* which begin with the first coming and ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Hebrew Messiah, and which run throughout the great Millennial Age, when the glory of God shall encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea. By a careful study of this block of scripture we see that this period of time naturally falls into four sections which are the personal ministry of our Lord, the Christian Dispensation, the Tribulation Period, and the great Millennial Era. This period of time is properly called messianic, because it gives the outline of Messiah's redemptive career.

Verses 1 to 4 of this prophecy constitute an impersonation by Isaiah of the Almighty. Thus as he played the role of God the Father in this vision, he was transported by the Spirit to the first century of the Christian Era. In this view of the future he saw King Messiah after His baptism and cried out to the people, "Behold, my servant ... I have put my Spirit upon him." This was a graphic way which the prophet adopted in forecasting for Israel the beginning of Messiah's public ministry—the descent of the Holy Spirit at His baptism upon Him in the presence of the public. When this passage, especially verse 1, is read in the light of Matthew 3:13-17, it becomes evident that that event was the fulfillment of the prediction.

Messiah starts out with an objective in view, establishing justice in the earth. The old version says "judgment." While the Hebrew term does have that significance, its primary meaning is that of justice. The facts of this context demand this latter meaning. Thus the prophet declared that Messiah, when He begins His personal ministry, will have as His objective the establishment of justice and righteousness in the world.

In verse 2 we see that Messiah will not be a street preacher. He will avoid all possibilities of clashing publicly with His opponents. When one reads Matthew 12:18-21, one sees that this prediction was applied by Matthew to the personal ministry of our Lord.

As Isaiah saw in the vision and as we learn from the Jewish historian Josephus, there were many political agitators in Palestine in the times of our Lord. Jesus refused to engage in a public open-air ministry lest He should be identified as one of these revolutionists and should inevitably clash with the authorities. No one is to understand by this prediction that in our Lord's refraining from open-air work He opposed street preaching. He has in a marvelous way during the centuries blessed such a public testimony to the salvation of myriads of souls.

According to verse 4 Messiah will not fail nor be discouraged until He reaches His objective. We are not to infer that He will become discouraged after He is successful. No one would do that. This prediction simply means that He will press on in His work until He reaches His objective, and then, of course, He will continue to do the great work which He alone can accomplish. The fact that He will not fail nor be discouraged implies that the work which He launches will seem outwardly, to those who do not have spiritual insight and who do not know the plans of God, to be a complete failure; but we are assured that men are not to look at circumstances and judge from appearances.

Without question, this verse refers to the personal ministry of our Lord which at times seemed to be a failure. It also refers to the movement which He inaugurated, namely, historic Christianity. This prediction implies that to the men of the world the church will appear to be a failure. But God is emphatic and says that it shall not fail.

The success of an enterprise is to be judged by the objective in view. Before one can pass sentence upon Christianity, one must know first the methods to be adopted and the objective to be reached. Many have thought that Christianity is to convert the world. This is a sad mistake. The preaching of the cross is a testimony to the world. It is the throwing out of the lifeline to drowning, dying men. Those who wish may take hold of it and be pulled ashore. God never forces nor coerces any one but permits everyone to exercise his own volition and choice. On this point James at the Jerusalem conference stated the case this way: "Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." Then Peter spoke of the gospel ministry of the present age. James said that this program of preaching the gospel is to take out of the nations a people for God's name. Let no one think that Christianity is a failure. It is not. It is a grand success and will continue to accomplish that for which it was intended. The prophet, therefore, was simply warning us against drawing an incorrect conclusion from outward appearances during the personal ministry of Christ and during the preaching of the gospel in the present age.

This movement (historical Christianity) launched by Christ and continued by his followers during the present dispensation, being not a failure but a success, will ultimately blossom forth into a grand consummation—at the second coming of Christ when He will establish justice and righteousness in the earth.

The prophet hastens to inform us that Messiah, when He makes His appearance after the Spirit has come upon Him, will not give His law to the isles. On the contrary, they will have to wait for it. In this connection we shall have to make a clear distinction between law and gospel. Law is a system of statutes for the regulation of the life and conduct of a people, which threatens punishment for every infraction of its legal requirements. On the contrary, grace is a manifestation of God's goodness in offering His blessings, the greatest of which is salvation, to men upon the condition of faith. The gospel was first preached by our Lord and by His apostles after Him. We are plainly told that the isles, that is, the nations, will not receive the Law of Messiah at the time of His first coming, but that they will have to wait for it. The period of their waiting for it is that which is known as the Christian Dispensation during which the gospel message is being proclaimed to all nations.

The present Christian Age, as we learn from many passages of Scripture, will be brought to a conclusion by the rapture of the church. By this term we mean that event which is spoken of by the Apostle Paul and which occurs when the Lord Jesus Christ descends from heaven to the air. At that time, He will raise the dead in Christ and catch up the living saints to be with Him for ever and ever. According to I Thessalonians, chapters 4 and 5, this event occurs before the period that is known as the great Tribulation. Believers, having been translated out of the kingdom of darkness, have been brought into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. They are therefore not appointed unto wrath—in the Tribulation—but unto the obtaining of salvation, deliverance from the period of wrath. We, therefore, place the rapture of the church before the Tribulation.

THE PROPHET AS THE FATHER'S REPRESENTATIVE DELIVERS SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE SON WHEN
HE IS IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS (vss. 5-8)

In Isaiah 42:5-8 we have a special message which Jehovah the Father sends to Jehovah the Son when He is in the darkest hour of His earthly career. In these verses the prophet is no longer impersonating God but is presenting himself before his audience as an ambassador of Jehovah the Father to Jehovah the Son with words of encouragement.

God the Father, the prophet says, is the creator of all things and is the one who puts the spirit of man within him (vs. 5). The Father in one sense is the creator of the universe, but in another sense—as the immediate agent—God the Son is the creator. (For proof of this position see John 1:1-4; Hebrews 1:1-4.)

That this message is given to Messiah in His darkest hour is seen in the assuring words found in verse 6: "I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee ..." Evidently there is a need for this message of encouragement, otherwise it would not be given.

Messiah's ministry consists of His becoming a bond uniting the people of Israel to Jehovah and His becoming a light to the Gentiles. He becomes, according to this program, the bond uniting Israel to God *first*; then He becomes God's light to the Gentiles. It is true that He has been a light to the Gentiles through the entire Christian Dispensation; nevertheless He has never been the light to them that He will be after Israel has been united to God. In other words, this prophecy yet awaits its complete fulfillment. When Messiah thus becomes the light of the Gentiles, He will open the blind eyes and bring out the prisoners from the dungeon and them that sit in darkness out of prison-houses (vs. 7). This prophecy will be fulfilled in Messiah's bringing life, liberty, joy, and happiness to all peoples. This promise will be fulfilled completely only in the Millennial Age, when wars will cease, when Satan will be bound. At that time there will be no prison-houses nor institutions for correction. The curse will be lifted and the regime of righteousness will be the order of the day.

God is steering history toward this ultimate goal. He has never been honored in this world as He should. Glory that is due His name has been given to idols. The Lord has tolerated this situation from the fall of man to the present day. But He will not permit this present situation to continue always. He will ultimately reach the goal when that morning without clouds—the Millennial Era—will dawn upon the world. Then will all glory and praise be given to God alone. Hence in this special portion of Scripture God the Father speaks to God the Son in His darkest hour, reassuring Him of His protection and deliverance and of the wonderful results that will flow from His sufferings. Hope, joy, expectation, and confidence are the things that buoy individuals up during times of discouragement, despondency, and trial.

The assurances that are set forth in this paragraph found their completest fulfillment at the time the Saviour was in Gethsemane when the Father sent angels to strengthen Him and doubtless to deliver a message to Him.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FULFILLMENT OF THE "FORMER THINGS"
AND THE COMING OF "NEW THINGS" (vss. 9-13)

In the next section, verses 9-13, we have a prediction of a world-wide revival. According to verse 9 the message to God the Son at the time of His deepest sorrow assures Him that the "former things"—things spoken concerning His first coming and His working out redemption for the human family—have, relatively speaking, been fulfilled. Then he makes a revelation concerning "new things"—before they spring forth. The new things mentioned in this verse are none other than the mighty revival described in verses 10-13. The prophet, who was at Jerusalem when he uttered this prediction, looked toward the west and saw messengers of salvation leaving Palestine, embarking at the ports of the country, and going across the seas to the nations of the western world. Then, in verse 11, turning toward the east and southwest, he saw messengers at the same time leaving the country and going to countries east of there with a message of hope and of

salvation. Following these revelations, in verse 12, he called upon them to give glory to God and to declare His praise in the isles. For these missionaries to the nations the prophet threw out a challenge to give God the glory and to declare His praises to the inhabitants of the earth. Because, therefore, of this marvelous message that will go out from Palestine to the whole world, the prophet, in verse 10, urged all to "Sing unto Jehovah a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth"—a new song because they are to have a new opportunity, such as they have never had before in their lives. The facts are that the world, even in the time of the great Tribulation, when this prophecy will be fulfilled, will for the first time have an opportunity of hearing the Word of God preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The central theme of the message of these evangelists is that "Jehovah will go forth as a mighty man; he will stir up *his* zeal like a man of war: he will cry, yea, he will shout aloud; he will do mightily against his enemies." These words doubtless refer to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation will come in mighty power to take vengeance on all who know not God and who obey not the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (II Thess., chap. 1).

When we read verses 9-13 in the light of related passages, such as Revelation, chapter 7, we see that Isaiah in vision saw the 144,000 Hebrew evangelists who will go forth in the first part of the Tribulation, proclaiming salvation to every nation, tribe, and language. While Isaiah does not give the results of this great gospel ministry, John, in Revelation, Chapter 7, does; for he tells us that an innumerable host from every nation, tribe, tongue, and language will come up out of the great Tribulation, will wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. To wash one's robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb is to enter into an experimental knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. These people who thus are saved come to the Lord under the ministry of these Hebrew Tribulation evangelists. The revival therefore in which we are all interested and for which we are praying and laboring, will come in the first part of the great Tribulation. Is there any hope of a mighty world-wide turning on the part of sinners to God prior to the Tribulation? I have scanned the Word of God from cover to cover and have never seen such a promise. Nevertheless, it is our privilege to declare with all the power God grants us the gospel to men now.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST (vss. 14-17)

In the next paragraph (vss. 14-17) the prophet again drops into his method of impersonation. On this occasion he plays the role of King Messiah who, at the psychological moment, when these evangelists have performed their world-wide task of proclaiming the gospel, will declare, "I have long holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: *now* will I cry out like a travailing woman; I will gasp and pant together ..." Thus at the end of the Tribulation Messiah will come forth as a mighty warrior and He will bring judgment and destruction upon all the wicked and ungodly.

CALL TO ISRAEL AS A NATION TO REPENT (vss. 18-22)

Once again the prophet changes his method of delivering his message and speaks as an ambassador to the nation of Israel. This is seen in verses 18-22. Though she is God's servant, she is nevertheless blind and does not understand the situation. At the time here foreseen the entire nation will be hounded by anti-Semites. Many of them will be in prison, others in the holes of the earth, and still others will fall a prey to the vicious spirit of anti-Semitism. To Israel thus, figuratively speaking, flat on her back, God will speak. He will speak, not only through His Word, but also through circumstances which He permits to come into the lives of individuals and nations.

CALL TO INDIVIDUAL HEBREWS TO REPENT (vss. 23-25)

In the concluding paragraph of chapter 42 (vss. 23-25), the prophet called upon the honest-hearted people in Israel to consider the condition of the nation and to ask themselves who has brought this condition about. Isaiah answers his own question by saying that it is God against whom the nation has sinned. He is the one who, through love and mercy, permits these conditions to arise.

PROMISE TO THE FAITHFUL REMNANT (43:1-13)

In the first seven verses of chapter 43 is a special message which God will send to the nation as she lies prostrate in helplessness before the Lord. He begins this special message by calling attention, through the prophet, to the fact that He created the Jewish nation for a purpose and that He has redeemed her. When Abraham and Sarah were past the age of parenthood, God performed a biological miracle which made possible the birth of Isaac. Not only has He created the Jewish nation and preserved it, but He has wrought redemption for it. This salvation was worked out at Calvary nineteen hundred years ago.

According to verses 2-4 those of Israel at that time who heed His message are not to fear anything regardless of what may come into their lives; for the Lord assures her that He will be with her in her experience; that is He will be with those who accept the message and bring them safely to the other side of the Tribulation.

In verses 5-7 is a vision of the regathering of the faithful remnant through whom God will be glorified throughout the entire Millennial Age, for He has created them for His glory.

The message concludes with the paragraph consisting of verses 8-13. Here the prophet again calls for an ideal convocation in which idolaters are to present their reasons for their faith and for their worshiping idols. He likewise calls upon the people of Israel to present the case for the existence of God and for the truth of His revelation.

Finally the prophet, speaking to the faithful remnant, says, "Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: ..." God has chosen this remnant that they might believe Him, understand Him, and know that He alone is God. Though Israel is at the present time on the siding, figuratively speaking, the remnant will come back upon the main line of God's plan and purpose and be used of Him in the proclamation of the truth to all nations.

Back in the eternity of the past there was no God except Jehovah. He created the heavens and the earth and has sustained them through the millenniums of their existence. The present heavens and earth will pass away after the Millennial Age (Ps. 102:23-28; Heb. 1:10-13; Rev. 20:11). After the dissolution of the present material universe, God alone will exist. After that time He will create the eternal order (Rev. 21; 22).

The one Eternal God is Jehovah. But what is the meaning of Jehovah? Etymologically speaking, it means "He who causes *all things to come into existence*." Concerning Jehovah Moses declared, "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah, our Gods, is Jehovah a unity." Whenever we see the word Jehovah in the Old Testament, we may know that it has one of four connotations which are: (1) Jehovah the Father, (2) Jehovah the Son, (3) Jehovah the Holy Spirit, (4) or, Jehovah the Holy Trinity. We must consult each context to determine which of these meanings "Jehovah" has in a given case.

At the present time Israel does not believe the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. But God has chosen the remnant to understand that message and to declare it to the world. She is to witness to all nations that, since the beginning of time, God alone existed; that He is the one who is overruling in the affairs of men; and that, when He purposes to do anything, He will perform it, and no one can reverse it.

How can Israel testify to these marvelous and fundamental truths since she does not know them? She misunderstands her mission in the world. There is but one way by which she can get the truth: We who have it must give it to her. May the Lord God Omnipotent, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stir His church, which has the message concerning these great subjects, to give it to her now that she, in turn, may come into a knowledge of these great spiritual realities and proclaim them to the world in fulfillment of this prediction.

Chapters 43:14—44:5

As has already been noted, the Babylonian captivity and Israel's restoration from it constitute the background of chapters 41-45. This fact must be kept in mind in order to evaluate properly the teaching of this section of the book. But the final deliverance of Israel from Babylonian domination in the end time, as we shall see later, lies behind chapters 46-48.

The section which constitutes the basis for this month's exposition is 43:14—44:5. This block of scripture makes a literary whole and must be dealt with accordingly. The prophet, appearing before his audience as the ambassador of the Lord, declared: "Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." As we have frequently seen, the word Jehovah is defined in Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Gods is Jehovah a unity" (lit. trans.). Sometimes it refers to God the Father; in other instances, to God the Son; at other times, to God the Holy Spirit; and still in other connections it designates the Holy Trinity. One must examine all the facts of a given context in order to determine which of these specific ideas is conveyed by the term.

In Isaiah 43:14 the speaker declares that He is Jehovah, the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. The same one in 44:6 speaks of Himself as being not only the Redeemer of Israel, but also her King. When we examine these references in the light of the historical fact of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage and in the further light of the fact that the same one actually redeemed her with His own precious blood, we come to the conclusion that this is none other than Jehovah the Son. Isaiah therefore stepped forward before his audience and presented himself as the ambassador of Jehovah the Son, the Redeemer of Israel.

In the historical record of Exodus we see that it was the angel of Jehovah, the angel of His presence, who, seeing the blood upon the doorposts and lintels, passed by every Israelitish house. When He passed over the land and destroyed the first-born of the Egyptians, that very night He led Israel forth out of bondage and thus redeemed her. As we see in Isaiah, chapter 53, the fulfillment of which is recorded in the Four Gospels, this same angel of Jehovah, who appeared upon earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, paid the supreme price for Israel's redemption—and that of the whole world—by shedding His precious blood for the remission of sins. Indeed this one who is presented as Jehovah and who sends His message through Isaiah is the Redeemer.

He is also the Holy One of Israel. The immanent, uncommunicable attributes of each person of the Godhead are truth, love, and holiness. But a study of God's character leads one to the conclusion that holiness is the dominant characteristic—if we may be allowed to make such a comparison. Isaiah constantly held before the people of Israel the fact that her Redeemer is holy. His holiness calls for purity of life on the part of the children of God.

In the next verse; Isaiah 43:15, Jehovah through the speaker declares: "I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." In a real, true sense, Israel's Redeemer is her Creator; for, when Abraham and Sarah were past the age of parenthood, the Lord performed a biological miracle upon their bodies which made possible the birth of Isaac. In Isaiah 43:1 this miracle is called an act of creation. His speaking in verse 15 of Himself as her Creator is an echo of this fact.

The speaker is also her King. Who is this King of Israel? This question is answered in Psalm 24:7-10. It likewise is mentioned in various other portions of the Scriptures. When all the related passages are brought together and studied carefully, one sees that this is none other than King Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, when He returns to the earth, will become her King. He will, however, refrain from forcing His will upon her. He will wait for her to welcome Him back as her King. That she will do this is evident from such passages as, Hosea 5:15—6:3. When the nation of Israel is given the facts concerning her long-rejected Messiah, she will, in the Tribulation, dispassionately and earnestly look for the truth. She will then find that Jesus of Nazareth, whom her ancestors rejected 1900 years ago was and is her true Messiah. Then in genuine penitence she will plead for his return. Thus at Israel's penitential cry, Messiah will respond and come, becoming King over His beloved people.

In verse 14 the prophet speaks of the destruction of the Babylonians' ships of rejoicing: "For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships of their rejoicing." According to historical accounts anciently the Babylonians had a merchant marine. Probably it was as good as any of that day and time. Moreover, it was quite likely that they rejoiced in the fact that they had foreign trade and commerce, which was borne to various nations by "the ships of their rejoicing."

But there is nothing in history that would indicate that this prophecy has been fulfilled in the manner as set forth here. From this prediction it appears that there is a sudden and a complete destruction of the ships of the Chaldeans. An examination of the history of Babylon and of its gradual decline does not give any information of a catastrophic overthrow of the city or of its merchant marine. This fact leads one to believe that probably this passage is looking out into the future, when the judgments of God will fall suddenly upon Babylon and all that pertains to her. With this thought in mind one should turn to Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51, together with Revelation, chapter 18, and compare these Scriptures. When this is done, one will conclude that the predictions concerning the sudden overthrow of Babylon have never been fulfilled. Since they have never been accomplished, we may conclude that these predictions are yet to be fulfilled in the future. Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14, should likewise be studied along with these passages. The facts in these chapters show that the sudden and catastrophic overthrow of Babylon with all her ships occurs in the day of Jehovah, the Tribulation. From Revelation, chapter 18, we see that Babylon will yet be a world city, the center of commerce and trade of all nations. Then, in an hour, suddenly, occurs the overthrow of this international metropolis with all its wealth. In view of all the facts, then, one concludes that the prediction of Isaiah 43:14 is yet to be fulfilled in the Tribulation—at the very end of it.

In verses 16 and 17 the prophet speaks of what the Lord did when He delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage. "Thus saith Jehovah, who maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; who bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the mighty man (they lie down together, they shall not rise; they are extinct, they are quenched as a wick)." The first part of this quotation refers to God's opening up the Red Sea in order that Israel and her hosts might pass safely through to the opposite shore. According to the historical record, after Israel had reached the opposite shore, the waters returned and overwhelmed the Egyptian army, all of which were drowned. Sometimes we hear statements to the effect that Pharaoh was also drowned with his army at that time. The Scriptures say nothing on this point. They speak only of the destruction of the army (cf. Exod. 15:1-18). That the opening up of the Red Sea for the passage of the Israelites was a miracle is the confirmed conviction of everyone who accepts the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Rationalists have tried to break the force of the testimony by saying that a wind blew back the shallow waters from the beaches and that Israel simply walked across on the sand. Such an explanation of the occurrence is ridiculous. A wind that was blowing such a gale as to drive the waters back from the beaches would have been of hurricane proportions and would have prevented the Israelitish hordes from passing over. They would have been unable to cross during such a gale. Thus the efforts to remove the miraculous element from the passage creates an insuperable difficulty to such rationalistic explanations. It is far better to accept the biblical statement, which is most reasonable and satisfying. According to Exodus 15:8 the waters

were blown back by the wind and were piled up and "The floods stood upright as a heap; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea." This is a poetical way of speaking of the freezing of the waters by the cold blasts of the east wind which drove them back. By the blowing of the wind a way was opened up in the sea, the waters were congealed on either side of it. Over this path the hosts of Israel passed. The presumption is that after the strong east wind had driven the waters back and congealed (frozen) them, the wind ceased. Without any interference, therefore, from the elements the hosts of Israel passed through the sea and reached the opposite shore. After Israel was safe on the other side, the ice, which was holding back the waters on either side, broke up, the waters rushed back, and overwhelmed the pursuing Egyptians, and "the sea covered them: They sank as lead in the mighty waters" (Exod. 15:10).

On that day the Lord wrought for Israel by direct intervention. This should not be considered as unreasonable; for the Lord who created the universe and who controls it certainly has the wisdom and the power to perform any miracle in order to bless His people and to forward His eternal plans.

In verse 18 the prophet, addressing Israel, declares: "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old." Israel has, throughout the centuries, looked back to the time of the Exodus and to the mighty works which God wrought in her behalf at that time. Moreover, throughout her entire career—at intervals, whenever an emergency arose—God has intervened and has worked in behalf of His Chosen People. To look back to these manifestations of God's love, mercy, and delivering power strengthens one's faith and prepares one to face new and unexpected dangers. The historical record of these mighty acts of God in behalf of His people are recorded for our benefit. Especially will this principle be operative with reference to the nation of Israel in the end time.

The prophet, looking out into the future, sees God working even in a greater way for the deliverance of His people than He did when He brought them forth from Egypt. Hear him, "19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20 The beasts of the field shall honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen, 21 the people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise" (Isa. 43:19-21).

According to verse 19 God promises to do a "new thing," something that He has never, in all the annals of human history, done before. Having his eyes focused upon this future time, the prophet declares: "Now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it?" The works which the Lord will perform yet in the future in order to deliver Israel will be so very mighty and stupendous that the miracles which He performed at the time of the Exodus will seem as nothing in comparison—they will be overshadowed by the greatness and the power of these future delivering acts. On this point hear the Prophet Jeremiah: "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, As Jehovah liveth, who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, As Jehovah liveth, who brought up and who led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I had driven them. And they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer. 23:7,8).

The first of these future acts of the Lord is that He will "make a way in the wilderness." This way of which the prophet is speaking will not be something that man has constructed. It will be by divine power, just as the way which the Lord made through the Red Sea. It will be just as literal and as actual as the opening up of the Red Sea. The second thing mentioned is that the Lord will make "rivers in the desert." Water is a great necessity. Without it no life would be possible. There are vast stretches of the earth's surface that are desolate, dreary wastes, impassable to man. Not so will it be at the time when God delivers His people, Israel. In a miraculous manner He will cause rivers of water to flow in the desert for them. The Lord provided food and water for Elijah, His faithful servant. He supplied water and manna for Israel when she was in the wilderness, and He will, for the chosen, faithful remnant again provide food and water. This promise is made in Isaiah 33:13-16—especially in verse 16: "... his bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." This abundance of

food and water will be especially provided, declared the Lord, "... to my people, my chosen." At the same time the beasts of the desert will enjoy refreshment from the water which the Lord, at that future time, will supply for His people.

Let us notice that God will meet the physical needs of His people Israel "... which / [Jehovah] formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise" (vs. 21). When the Lord created the Hebrew nation, He had a definite purpose in view, which is expressed in the words, "that they might set forth my praise." Israel's mission in the world is a spiritual one. She has never performed the task for which she was created. It is true that individuals of that race have done the will of God in a limited way and have thus glorified Him, but this passage speaks of the Lord's delivering the remnant of His people whom He has formed to set forth His glory and praise. God never will be praised and glorified in the proportion set forth in the prophetic word till this part of the nation, the remnant, is given the truth, turns to Him with all of its heart, and becomes an empty channel through which His power may flow every day and every hour. God created Israel for His glory and she shall yet fit into this international picture, passing on the divine blessings to the world.

In the next paragraph of our chapter, which begins with verse 22, Jehovah declares: "22 Yet thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. 23 Thou hast not brought me of thy sheep for burnt-offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not burdened thee with offerings, nor wearied thee with frankincense. 24 Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast burdened me with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities" (Isa. 43:22-24).

The word "yet" at the beginning of this passage shows a contrast between what has preceded and that which the prophet is about to state. As we have just seen, the Lord is, through the prophet, showing what a wonderful deliverance He will yet work for Israel, who has been created and formed for His glory and praise. Notwithstanding what He has done for her and purposes still to do for and through her, Israel is blind and has not lived in close fellowship and communion with Him. In fact, the prophet indicts the whole nation for not calling upon God. We must understand that this language is used relatively; for various individuals throughout the centuries have called upon Him and have been in touch and communion with Him, but the great majority of the nation has not. When we realize that the prophet, when he makes this prediction, is looking out toward the end time, we can know that He is looking at the present era during which Israel, as a nation, has not been calling upon God; but on the contrary she has been going on in her own way, ignoring the one and only approach to God—the Lord Jesus Christ, the new and the living way. To this conclusion we are forced when we read this prediction in the light of related passages.

Instead of delighting in the Lord and rejoicing in what He has done for her, Israel on the other hand has been weary of Him and His ways.

According to verse 23 the prophet charges Israel with not bringing the proper offerings, although the Lord has not been unreasonable in asking her to make certain sacrifices that typified the one and only efficacious offering that makes one acceptable in God's sight. The offerings and sacrifices commanded by the law of Moses were typical and hence were only a temporary arrangement, keeping before the nation constantly the fact that the redemption of the soul, is costly—that it must be paid for in blood; not the blood of bulls and goats which were offered often upon the altar at the sacred Temple, but by the precious blood of the Son of God, which can wash away every stain, both for time and for eternity.

Still keeping in mind that the prophet in this prediction is looking forward across the centuries to Israel's final deliverance at the end of the Tribulation, we see a fuller meaning in verse 23 concerning her not bringing sacrifices and not being burdened with offerings. This verse is a pun upon words, a play upon ideas. The nation had been burdened, in a way, by the many sacrifices commanded by the law; but the fullness of time came when God no longer wanted those animal sacrifices. He therefore prepared a body for the Son of God who would come and do the will of God regarding the atonement for the soul. During these centuries of the Christian Era over which the prophet is here looking, God has not

burdened Israel with sacrifices and offerings as formerly, but He himself has made the one and only necessary offering to make the soul acceptable to God. Everything is by the goodness of the Almighty and all His gifts, including eternal life, may be had by accepting His free grace. The prophet therefore asserts that God at the present time is not burdening Israel by demanding of her offerings and sacrifices.

Instead of her being burdened by the Lord in an elaborate ritualism, she has burdened Him with her sins and wearied Him with her iniquities, chief of which is the national sin of rejecting her Messiah, which sin must be confessed before there can be any relief for the nation (Hosea 5:15; Lev. 26:40).

To show what the Lord meant by His not burdening Israel with offerings and sacrifices, the prophet as His ambassador declares, "25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake: and I will not remember thy sins. 26 Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: set thou forth *thy cause*, that thou mayest be justified. 27 Thy first father sinned, and thy teachers transgressed against me. 28 Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; and I will make Jacob a curse, and Israel a reviling" (Isa. 43:25-28).

When we read these verses in the light of the New Testament revelation, we know that the "I" of this passage is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who blots out transgressions and forgives sins. There is but one way by which sins, transgressions, and iniquities can be blotted out—by the precious blood of the Son of God. When God does forgive sins, He remembers them no more. They are gone—for time and eternity.

Thus the prophet, as the representative of Messiah, in talking to Israel of the end time, assures her that He is ready to blot out her transgressions and will never remember her sins again. This prediction will be carried out by the Lord in His sending forth the 144,000 Jewish evangelists of whom we read in Revelation, chapter 7, and who will plead with the nation to accept Him then and there. At that time, as we learn from other passages in the Scriptures, the whole nation will repudiate the national sin, will accept the atoning blood of the Son of God; then the nation will be born anew, and the iniquity of that land will be removed in one day.

The Lord therefore, in order to emphasize grace pleads with the nation to put Him in remembrance and to set the national cause before Him in order that they may be justified. God reasons with people. He is eager for Israel to set forth her case before Him that she may be justified. But she can never set her real situation before Him until the truth concerning her exact status is made known to her. When she sees things as they are and views herself in the light of the revelation of God, she will then set her cause before Him, will accept His atoning righteousness, and be justified.

To show Israel how sinful she has been, the prophet in verse 27 calls attention to the fact that her first father, Abraham, sinned and that her teachers (lit., *interpreters*) have likewise transgressed. He therefore profaned the princes of the sanctuary and made "Jacob a curse, and Israel a reviling." In the Revised Version we have this translation in the text, "Therefore I will profane the princes ..." The marginal reading is, "Therefore I have profaned the princes ..." The latter reading fits in perfectly with the flow of thought. I therefore prefer it. Because the leaders of Israel have transgressed and led the nation astray, God has profaned the princes of the sanctuary and has made Israel to be a hiss, a byword, and a curse among the nations, throughout the present era of her rejection.

But in 44:1-5, which is the last paragraph of this marvelous discourse, the prophet pleads with this future Israel to give ear to the Lord because she still is His servant, whom He has chosen: "44 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen: 2 Thus saith Jehovah that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, who will help thee: Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and streams upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4 and they shall spring up among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. 5 One shall say, I am Jehovah's; and another shall call

himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto Jehovah, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel.

Those who will take heed to the warning, will come and throw themselves upon His grace and mercy by accepting the long-rejected Messiah need not fear, because the Lord has chosen them. This assurance of protection is reiterated time and again throughout the second half of Isaiah.

In verse 3 the remnant of Israel is represented as thirsty ground, dry land, upon which God promises to pour water, and over which He assures the people that He will send streams of refreshing. That He is not talking about literal deserts is clear from the statement parallel to this one in the latter half of the verse: "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing *upon* thine offspring ..." This is the promise that God will pour out His Spirit upon the faithful remnant. On the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles, the great day (six months before the crucifixion), our Lord Jesus called upon those who were thirsty to come to Him and drink (John 7:37f). The Apostle John explained that this language was not to be taken literally, but stated that Jesus was referring to the pouring out of the Spirit upon those who should believe on Him. The language is clearly an echo of this promise which the Lord makes to the nation of Israel in the passage under consideration. The individual now who accepts Jesus of Nazareth as Lord and Saviour receives the Spirit. When this prophecy is fulfilled, the entire nation of Israel living then will receive Him and thus upon each one the Spirit of God will come and satisfy the thirsty soul. At that time "One shall say, I am Jehovah's; and another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto Jehovah, and surname *himself* by the name of Israel" (vs. 5). At that time anti-Semitism will have vanished from the earth. Every Hebrew living then will be rejoicing in the fact that he is of Jewish origin and will write with his own hand, "Unto Jehovah." The marginal reading of this quotation is *write on his hand, unto Jehovah*. Both renderings are possible. Everyone of Israel who survives to that time will become a consecrated, devout follower of Messiah and will have the name of God in some way connected with his name.

Isaiah, in 4:3, speaks of those who remain in Jerusalem after the Tribulation as being written among those who are living in Zion. A reference to this future register is found in Psalm 87:5,6.

Thus in Isaiah 44:1-5 we see an invitation to Israel to accept her Messiah. Here we get a glimpse of the great Millennial Era when our Lord shall reign in glory and splendor over the earth. At that time Jerusalem will be His capital.

Chapter 44:6-23

The section of Isaiah which we have for consideration this month consists of 44:6-23. This block of scripture constitutes a literary unit in the Book of Isaiah. In this sermon the prophet once again called attention to the fact that God alone exists and that Israel is His servant, His witnesses. He then showed the folly of idolatry and delineated the process of making an idol. Following this detailed description, he explained why seemingly intelligent men will engage in such useless, unreasonable worship. He concluded the message by calling Israel's attention to the fact that it is God alone who blots out her sins. The final thought is an ejaculation, calling upon all living things to rejoice in the fact that God "hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel."

The sermon begins with following words:

"6 Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God. 7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I established the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and that shall come to pass, let them declare. 8

Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have I not declared unto thee of old, and showed it? and ye are my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no Rock; I know not any" (44:6-8).

Again in this study I wish to call attention to the fact that the word Jehovah has four different connotations and that the facts of each context must determine its specific meaning in a given case. Sometimes it refers to God the Father; at other times, to God the Son; on other occasions the data of the context indicates the Holy Spirit; and finally, in other contexts, the term refers to the Holy Trinity. What is its meaning here? In apposition with the word Jehovah is the expression, "the King of Israel, and his Redeemer." When this passage is read in the light of parallel ones, it immediately becomes apparent that God the Son is the one who is called Israel's King. He is also her Redeemer. At the time of the Exodus He appeared in His prenatal state as "the angel of Jehovah," and delivered her from her servile bondage. It was He who nineteen hundred years ago paid the price of her redemption. It is He who will, when she acknowledges her national sin, come and realistically deliver her from all of her foes. In view of these facts one may be confident that the speaker here is none other than the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The one whom the prophet is representing declares, "I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God." How, one may ask, can the speaker be the second person of the Trinity, and at the same time declare that there is no God besides Him? Such a question is to the point and demands a candid, straightforward answer. The only solution to this problem is that which is offered in the correct explanation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. As I show in my new volume, *The God of Israel*, there are three divine personalities appearing here and there throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. They are separate and distinct as an investigation of each context shows. At the same time they are, as Moses asserted in Israel's Great Confession, one in a different sense of the term. Speaking in New Testament phraseology, I have need only to call attention to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ, according to His infallible assertion, and the Father are one. Although they are one in a very definite sense, Jesus in prayer could speak of Himself as "I, me, or mine," and of God the Father as "thou and thee." The Apostle Paul declared that in the person of the Lord Jesus all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily—every attribute or characteristic of Deity dwelt in Him as an individual. Isaiah, in the passage under consideration, understood the same doctrine and spoke accordingly. The Redeemer of Israel, therefore, could say, "Besides me there is no God." In one sense He is distinct from the other two personalities of the Godhead; yet at the same time He, realizing the essential unity of their nature, could declare that there is no God besides Him.

In verse 7 the prophet, as the representative of Israel's Redeemer, asks who can, like Himself, declare and set in order the events of the past since He established the ancient people of Israel. If no one could thus reproduce the past history of the nation accurately, who can, asks the prophet, outline the future of the nation? It was only by inspiration that the sacred writers could survey the centuries of the past and could write accurately that which had transpired. It is only by the infallible inspiration of the Spirit that a prophet of God could write history ahead of time. None of the false prophets nor the idols whom they represented could do either.

Then the prophet encouraged the nation, urging it not to be afraid nor fear lest his challenge can be taken up by anyone; for the Redeemer of Israel is the one who has, through the prophets, declared the past and showed it. Israel constitutes God's witnesses to the world. The Jew is God's imperishable monument to the truth. The prophets proclaimed the Word of God to the nation *in the past*, and the faithful remnant of Israel will *yet* become His witnesses to the truth and will proclaim it to the world. In the future this remnant of Israel will learn the facts concerning the persons of the Holy Trinity and will declare the truth to the nations, but she cannot give that which she does not have. We, therefore, who have the truth must give it to her that she in turn may proclaim it to the world.

In verses 9-11 the prophet showed that both graven and molten images are of no profit. Isaiah therefore challenged his auditors to find a single image, or god, that had been of any profit to anyone. He concluded this phase of his discussion

by challenging idol makers and worshipers of the same to gather together to present their cause. Then he showed that they shall fear and be put to shame together.

In verses 12-17 the prophet in a most stinging and realistic manner depicted the process of making idols. In verse 12 he showed the smith making an axe, with which the idol worshiper cuts down the tree. In verse 13 he presented the carpenter with his line and pencil drawing the form that the image is to have. Then the carpenter took the wood with his plane, marked it out with his compass, and shaped the form of a man. In verse 14 we see the workman hewing down the cedars, the holm-tree, and the oak. But before he goes to cut down the tree, he waters and fertilizes the growing plant in order that it might become a strong tree. When it is cut down, the best part of the wood is used for making an idol. With part of the same tree, the workman builds a fire by which he warms himself. With part of it he also cooks his bread and roasts his meat. With the rest he makes various gods.

One immediately asks himself, How is it that any intelligent person can plant a tree, fertilize it, look to the rains to give it moisture until it becomes the proper size; then can take part of it with which to warm himself, part with which to bake his bread, and finally make the rest of it into images, before which he falls down and worships, and to which he prays? How can any sane, sensible person act thus? To us it seems ridiculous. Are those who thus engage in idolatry void of all understanding? Have they no common sense? Have they no brains? Can they not understand the law of cause and effect? O yes! Idolaters are some of the most brilliant people in the world. They can understand the various sciences. They can perform marvelous feats in material matters. What then is the trouble? The answer is given in these words: "For he [Jehovah] hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand" (vs. 18). God blinds the minds of men who do not want truth, and who will not see the evidence of His everlasting power and divinity that is stamped upon the entire material universe. When men will not receive the truth but prefer error, God will blind the eyes and harden their hearts so that they cannot understand even the most rudimentary principles of religion. The Lord blinds their minds by allowing Satan, the god of this world, to hide spiritual realities from them. (See Isaiah 66:3,4; II Cor. 4:3,4; II Thess. 2:8-10.) The prophet therefore declared, "A deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (vs. 20). The natural heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. When one turns from the truth and Satan blinds one's eyes, it is utterly impossible for one to comprehend spiritual realities. Under those conditions one will do most unreasonable and absurd things. From a spiritual standpoint there is neither rhyme nor rhythm in what such a person does.

With verse 20 the prophet dropped the discussion of the folly of idolatry and the unprofitableness of worshiping images. With verse 21 he, as God's representative, began to speak to Israel saying, "Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shall not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (vss. 21,22).

The words "Jacob" and "Israel" are synonymous terms, referring to the Jewish people. The Hebrews constituted God's, servants. They are still His servants, although the majority of the race has turned its back upon the spiritual realities of the Old Testament and has rejected in toto the New. Nevertheless, the gifts and the callings of God are not repented of. The Lord will, as we have often seen in this series of expositions, purge all wickedness from the ranks of Israel and will purify the nation, which at that time will become the new Israel. He will then use her as He has never before. Truly, then, she will be God's servant.

Once more the Lord called Israel's attention to the fact that He had formed her, and that therefore she is His servant. He not only formed her, but He also created her to be the channel of world-blessing (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 43:1).

The Lord likewise gave Israel assurance saying, "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me." Mothers, declared Isaiah in chapter 49, may forget their children; yet the Lord will never forget Israel. That nation is ever before His mind. The Shepherd of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is now seated above the cherubim, is still guiding the nation. When the penitent remnant sees the truth regarding Him and calls upon Him, He will leave His position in glory, shine forth, and come to save His people (Ps. 80:1-3). He is waiting patiently to hear that cry for deliverance.

The Lord cries out in verse 22, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins ..." The blotting out of sins, according to this statement, is an accomplished fact—"I have blotted." Nevertheless, the Lord follows this statement by the exhortation, "Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Although He states that He has blotted out her sins and has redeemed her, yet He insists that she return to Him. The exhortation for her to return is positive proof that she has not returned at the time here foreseen. Does God blot out the sins of anyone before he returns to Him in genuine repentance? The answer is a most emphatic denial. What is the significance, then, of the expression "I have blotted out?" When we view this statement in the light of related passages, this verse becomes very clear. The means by which the sins are blotted out is an accomplished fact, but Israel will have to repent and come to her Messiah in order to enjoy the blessings that have been procured for her by the finished work of Messiah—on the cross. My sins were dealt with at Calvary nineteen hundred years ago, but I had to come and accept the Lord before He would blot them out in reality. Thus it is with Israel. The price of redemption was paid at Calvary—the shedding of the blood of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. The prophet, therefore, in vision looked forward to some time in the future and, as if present in this coming period, declared to Israel, "I have blotted out ... thy sins ... I have redeemed thee." This vision will become a reality when we who know the truth concerning the redemption at Calvary tell the nation this very story that her sins were blotted out nineteen hundred years ago; but that she must repent of her wrongs and accept the long-rejected Messiah in order to enjoy the benefits accruing from His redemption.

The prophet looked beyond the proclamation of the truth to Israel and saw the time when the entire nation living at that future period will have learned the truth, will have accepted it, and will have become beloved in the Beloved. In other words, he sees the remnant of Israel saved and in fellowship and communion with her God and her Messiah. He therefore exultantly calls upon all intelligent beings in the heavens to sing and those in the lower parts of the earth to shout. He speaks to inanimate nature and calls upon it—every mountain and every tree of the forest—to break forth into singing for what God has wrought and for the coming blessing.

He therefore sees the nation in closest fellowship with God and declares, "For Jehovah has redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel." God created the nation of Israel in order that He might be glorified through her. He will never be glorified in the world as contemplated by the prophet until the truth is given to Israel and she accepts Him. May we, in the power of the Spirit, give this message to God's ancient people in order that this vision might be realized.

THE TWO RESTORATIONS OF ISRAEL

Chapters 44:24—45:25

This month's study consists of Isaiah 44:24—45:25. This block of scripture constitutes a single literary unit in the Book of Isaiah. The prophet introduced his message by addressing Jehovah, who is the God of creation, of providence, and of performance (44:24-28). The forecast covers Israel's restoration from Babylonian Captivity under Cyrus (45:1-13); her final restoration to the land from her world-wide dispersion (45:14-19); and finally, the call for all nations to come and accept the salvation of God, which prediction will be fulfilled in the great evangelistic campaign that will be conducted by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists of whom we read in Revelation, chapter 7.

Jehovah, The God of Creation, of Providence and of Performance

The prophet presented himself before his audience as the representative of Jehovah, Israel's Redeemer. In former studies we have seen that the one who thus spoke of Himself was none other than the Messiah of Israel, who redeemed the nation from Egyptian bondage, who paid the redemption price for Israel and for the world at Calvary, and who will literally redeem the nation, that is, the remnant of the people, and restore them to fellowship with God and to their own land. This one, Israel's Messiah, is the one who thus speaks to the nation in the oracle which we have for consideration.

He speaks of Himself as the one who "formed" the nation. As we have already seen, He was the creator of the Jewish nation in that He performed a biological miracle upon the bodies of Abraham and Sarah, when they were past the age of parenthood, and made possible the birth of Isaac. It is doubtless to this miracle that reference is made in 44:24. He is not only the creator of the Jewish race, but He is the creator of all things, for He has stretched out the heavens above and spreads abroad the earth. He being the omnipotent God, the creator of all things, throws out the challenge in this connection by saying, "Who is with me?" This interrogation demands a negative answer. This God of creation is also the God of providence, for it is He who, according to Isaiah 44:25 "frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish." These prognosticators and diviners make forecasts. Many of them, of course, have done that by the power of the devil and demons, but they do not have the ability to see very far into the future. Thus when they make such predictions through human agencies, their prognostications fail. God overrules history and prevents the fulfillment of their forecasts.

He is also, according to verse 26, the God of performance. He "confirmeth the word of his servant, and performed the counsel of his messengers." A similar thought is found in God's call to Jeremiah. The Lord assured him: "I watch over my word to perform it." (Jer. 1:11,12). No word from God is without-power. Has He not spoken, and will He not do it?

Jehovah has spoken other things and has fulfilled His promises to the letter. Isaiah called attention to the fact that this omnipotent Jehovah had spoken concerning Jerusalem saying, "She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof." These statements refer doubtless to former predictions which the Lord had made relative to Jerusalem and Palestine. Now the Lord in these verses (44:26-28) made a very definite prediction concerning the one whom He would use in restoring the Jews to their land and in giving them permission to build the city and temple. This prediction is such a very important one that I must quote it: "Thus saith Jehovah ... that stretcheth forth the heavens ... that frustrateth the signs of the liars ... that confirmeth the word of his servant ... that saith to the deep ... that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (44:24-28).

According to this forecast God declared through Isaiah that He would use Cyrus to do two things: he would issue a decree saying concerning Jerusalem, "She shall be built; and of the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." Thus God

declared that Cyrus would order the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the building of the Temple. About this statement there cannot be any controversy among those who really and truly believe that the Bible is the very Word of God, which is infallibly inspired. Thus, according to this prediction, Cyrus would not only issue the decree for the building of the Temple, but also for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. If words mean anything at all, this passage can mean nothing less than this.

Did Cyrus in fulfillment of this promise, issue a proclamation authorizing the rebuilding of both the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Some sincere brethren say that he issued a decree only for the re-building of the Temple. As proof of this position they refer to Ezra 1:1-4, which gives the proclamation that was decreed by Cyrus for the rebuilding of the Temple. But nothing is said in this passage about the restoration of Jerusalem. Because of this fact, many sincere brethren say that the decree of Cyrus included only the Temple—and not the city. They take this position because they cannot harmonize the Ussher chronology, which is accepted today universally, with the position that Cyrus issued the decree for both the building of the Temple and the city. The year in the accepted chronology for the issuing of the decree by Cyrus is 536 B.C. In Daniel 9:25 we are told that the beginning of the seventy weeks of years of this prophecy dates from the year of the issuing of the decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. According to Daniel, there would be 483 years from the issuance of the decree to rebuild the city to the cutting off of King Messiah. Cyrus issued the decree for the rebuilding of the Temple, according to the received chronology, in the year 536 B.C. Christ was crucified in the year 30 A.D. Then from the issuing of the decree to the crucifixion there were 565 years (one year is deducted in passing over from the B.C. dates to the A.D. dates.) But Daniel said that there would be 483 years from the issuing of the decree to rebuild the city to the crucifixion of the Messiah. There is an excess of 82 years in the received chronology. It is therefore concluded by these earnest, sincere scholars, that Cyrus did not do what God through Isaiah foretold that he would do, namely, to issue the decree for the rebuilding of the city.

When all the facts of the Book of Ezra are studied, one is driven to the conclusion that Cyrus did issue the decree for the building of both the Temple and the city. (For full proof of this position, see either of my volumes, *The 70 Weeks of Daniel*, or, *Messiah: His first Coming Scheduled*.)

When one makes an investigation of the chronology of the Old Testament and compares it with the received chronology, which we have accepted from Ptolemy, a heathen astronomer, one will see that Ptolemy guessed at the facts and gave us the wrong chronology. It is impossible to fit the scriptural facts into the false chronology which we inherited from a heathen chronologer. The B.C. dates are incorrect. Since God said that Cyrus would issue both decrees, we are confident that he did.

The First Restoration of Israel Under Cyrus

There were to be but two restorations of Israel to her own land. The second one is the final regathering at the close of this age and the beginning of the Millennium (Isa., chap. 11). According to Isaiah 45:1-13, Cyrus was the chosen of God to act as the agent in Israel's first restoration to her own land.

Concerning this ruler we see from Isaiah 45:1 that God calls him his "anointed." Prophets, priests, and kings in Israel were anointed. Saul, David, and Solomon were called the Lord's anointed or messiah, each being the messiah in his day. Since Cyrus, the heathen king who did not know God, was to be the agent whom God would use to send His people back to their own land, the Lord called him His messiah. Thus, in an accommodated sense, Cyrus was God's messiah.

In order that he might accomplish the work which He had outlined for him, God said that He would hold Cyrus' hand to subdue nations before him. God does overrule in the affairs of men and gives the kingdom, the authority, the power, and the might to whomever He chooses. No king is delivered by a multitude of hosts. A horse is a vain thing for safety. The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous and His ears are open unto their prayer (Psalm 33). Notwithstanding these fundamental principles of God's government of the nations of the world, there are those who say that God is on the side

of the largest gun. Such statements are but expressions of human wisdom. God does confound the mighty and the strong and does lift up the humble and weak. When the Lord wants to destroy a powerful nation, He takes away the wisdom of its leaders (Isa. 19:11-15). He erects barriers and difficulties before nations. At the same time He clears the way for the nations whom He can use in forwarding His plans and purposes of the ages. Such is the teaching of Isaiah 45:1-3.

But why, one may ask, did God open the way for Cyrus to world conquest? The answer to that question is found in the following verses: "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. 5 I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God. I will gird thee, thou hast not known me; 6 that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:4-6).

From verse 4 we see that God gave success to the arms of Cyrus purely and solely for the sake of the Jewish nation. His servant— "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee ..." Israel is indeed the hub of the nations. All history revolves around that people. The nation that blesses Israel will be blessed; those that curse her will be cursed. Germany is today where she is and will be for years to come because of her mistreatment of the Jewish people.

In verse 5 the Lord declares that He is Jehovah, the Self-Existing One, and that there is none besides Him. In our exposition of this book we have seen on several occasions that the word *Jehovah* has four connotations. Sometimes it refers to God the Father; at other times, to God the Son; and in other places, to God the Holy Spirit. In still other connections the facts of the context indicate that it indicates the Holy Trinity, the Three-in-One. It is not always possible for us to be dogmatic and say that it has any certain one of these connotations in a given place. In this verse, however, it seems that it signifies the Holy Trinity; and yet it is possible that it refers to the second person of the Trinity.

The Lord declared, "I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me ..." God uses men, means, and nations in the forwarding of His plans and purposes. At the same time they may be unconscious of being instruments in His hands. The reason that He girded Cyrus, though he was a heathen and did not know the Almighty, was that He might bring a blessing into the life of Israel, with the ultimate purpose that they "may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else." Thus the Lord used Cyrus in bringing a blessing into the life of the Jewish nation. But this was not the ultimate goal. God, in bringing a blessing to Israel, intends that she shall pass it on to all nations in order that all may come to a true knowledge of the one Jehovah. This result has never been accomplished, but God did use Cyrus in restoring Israel after the Babylonian captivity. This return was a step in the unfolding of His plans. History would have been entirely different from what it has been if God had not used Cyrus and had not restored Israel as He did. Eventually, when we shall know fully even as we are fully known, we shall see that God used Cyrus in the restoration of Israel to her own land after the Babylonian captivity in the carrying out of His plan of the ages.

God furthermore, in verse 7, declared that He forms the light and creates darkness, that He makes peace and creates evil. He forms the light and causes it to withdraw, which action produces that condition called darkness. He makes peace. He also creates evil—evil in the sense of calamity or punishment. In other words, in this verse the Lord declares that He does all of these things, and that it is He who is overruling and controlling all things. At the same time He allows man to exercise his own freedom.

In verse 8 of our passage the prophet, seeing the future by inspiration, was led to exclaim, "Distil, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, that it may bring forth salvation, and let it cause righteousness to spring up together; I, Jehovah, have created it." Here the restoration of Israel from Babylonian servitude furnished a kind of foretaste to the prophet of the great and final restoration of Israel in the future. He thought of the blessings that come to Israel and the world in terms of the showers and rains which produce fruitful seasons. He therefore

called upon the skies to pour down righteousness. Moreover, he wanted the earth to open and receive the blessings sent from heaven. God's using Cyrus and various providential occurrences were to the prophet in this figure the showers from heaven; the fruit of these showers being that of salvation and righteousness with all their attendant blessings.

Seeing the unfolding of God's plan through the ages, especially as it pertains to the nation of Israel, the prophet in verses 9 and 10 threw out a warning against any and everyone who might speak against God and strive with his Maker. Anyone who finds fault with God's plan is by the prophet compared to a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth. It is not for the clay to speak to the potter who fashions it. God is shaping history. He is marching majestically through the centuries and is carrying forward His banner as He overrules the movements of the nations. It is not therefore for man to find fault with anything that the Lord does.

In verses 11-13 we find further confirmation of the position stated above regarding Cyrus and his being used of God to issue the decree for the restoration of the people and the building of the city of Jerusalem, as well as the decree that the Temple should be rebuilt. That the reader might see the force of this statement, I quote these verses.

Thus saith Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: Ask me of the things that are to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me. 12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens; and all their host have I commanded. 13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts. (Isa. 45:11-15).

In verse 11 the prophet challenged his audience, speaking for God, in inquiring regarding things to come. What things especially? Those that pertained to His "sons," the children of Israel. Then in verse 12 the Lord called attention to the fact that He is the one who has created the earth, in fact, the entire universe. Not only has He done this, but He declared, "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways; he shall build my city [Jerusalem], and he shall let my exiles go free [the Jews in Babylonian exile go free], not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts." In this verse God makes the positive, unequivocal statement that it was He who raised up Cyrus. This He did in righteousness. What He did in connection with Cyrus and through him was all in accordance with the high, divine standards of righteousness. Moreover, He declared that He would make the paths straight for Cyrus, who would build the city of Jerusalem and who would allow the exiles to go free—without money or without price. In view of this plain utterance it is impossible for me to see how anyone who believes the Scriptures to be the Word of God can reach any conclusion other than that Cyrus issued the decrees for both the building of the Temple in Jerusalem and also the restoration of the city. I am thoroughly convinced that Cyrus did issue this decree involving the restoring of the Temple and the city. I am of the profound conviction, moreover, that the seventy weeks of Daniel began with the year that Cyrus issued this decree, that the Messiah was cut off exactly 483 years after that time—according to the prophecy of Daniel, chapter 9. It is very important that all Bible students who believe the Word should have a clear conception of this teaching. It is time for us to awake, to throw off the heathenism in our chronology, and to accept the biblical dating.

The Second Restoration of Israel

In Isaiah, chapter 45, we see an application of the biblical principle known as the "law of double reference." The principle involved in this law may be stated thus: The prophet pictured before his audience something in the near future and blended that description with another one of a similar character in the more distant future. As we have just seen, in the first thirteen verses, the prophet was speaking of the restoration of the Jews from Babylonian captivity under Cyrus the Persian. From that event he was carried forward by the Spirit of God and saw the final regathering of Israel to her own land and into fellowship with her God. This is set forth in verses 14-17.

14 Thus saith Jehovah, The labor of Egypt, and the merchandise of Ethiopia, and the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall go after thee; in chains they shall come over; and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God. 15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. 16 They shall be put to shame, yea, confounded, all of them; they shall go into confusion together that are makers of idols. 17 *But* Israel shall be saved by Jehovah with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be put to shame nor confounded world without end (Isa. 45:14-17).

Throughout the centuries Israel has been the tail of the nations, whereas in the great Kingdom Era she will be the head (Deut. 28:15). This same teaching is set forth in the following passage:

"He subdueth peoples under us, And nations under our feet" (Ps. 47:3).

According to our present passage God will give in exchange for Israel other nations, who will become the servants of His Chosen People in the future. This is in perfect keeping with the promise that the Lord made through Isaiah to the effect that the Jewish people will become the priests and ministers of God, whereas certain of the Gentile nations will become their servants (Isa. 61:5,6).

In the midst of this passage which speaks of the future restoration and glory of Israel, the prophet declared, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour." For the blessing and good of humanity the Lord has hidden Himself, as it were, behind the material universe. Nevertheless, that which may be known of God is manifest to all nations: "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). All who have not forgotten to return thanks to God, but who are longing for more light can see His everlasting power and divinity and can thus acknowledge Him who is, in a particular sense, "the God of Israel, the Saviour." Although God has seemingly retired behind the material universe, He nevertheless is in the forefront of affairs and is directing the course of history. He will therefore eventually eliminate all idolatry from the face of the globe. Those who persist in such pagan practices will of course be banished from the earth and sent to their eternal place of distress and banishment from the presence of God and the glory of His might.

In contrast with the wicked, pagan nations Israel will be saved with an everlasting salvation, for the Lord declared, "*But Israel* shall be saved by Jehovah with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be put to shame nor confounded world without end." All nations shall perish as nations. All human philosophies, national ideologies, cultures, and civilizations shall pass away. In fact, those characteristics that distinguish the various nationalities will be abolished. Not so with Israel. Though she shall pass through the fiery furnace of the great Tribulation, she loses neither her nationality nor identity; for the Lord declared through Jeremiah: "For I am with thee, saith Jehovah, to save thee: for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, but I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will in no wise leave thee unpunished" (Jer. 30:11).

The Lord's restoring Israel and saving her with an everlasting salvation is in line with His eternal plan and purpose, which He had when He created the universe. This thought is expressed as explanation of the promise found in verse 18: "For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, the God that formed the earth and made it, that established it and created it not a waste, that formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah; and there is none else." According to this verse when the Lord created the heavens and the earth, they were not in the condition in which they are now. "The Rock, his work is perfect ..." (Deut. 32:4). When God created the earth it was perfect. Later some calamity overtook it and reduced it to the chaotic condition described in Genesis 1:2. That this position is correct may be seen from the fact that God said specifically that He did not create the world "a waste." He formed it that it might be inhabited. Nevertheless Genesis, chapter 1, tells

us that it was a waste or became a waste. If it was created perfect and if it was a waste, evidently there was a calamity which overthrew the primitive condition and reduced it to that state of desolation and waste.

When the Lord created the universe and related each of the planets and constellations, balancing them by the power of gravitation, he had a definite specific plan in view with reference to this earth—that it shall be inhabited. It is still His purpose, according to Isaiah's statement, that it shall be inhabited, in the fullest sense of the term.

When God created Adam, He told him to be fruitful and to multiply and fill the earth. He gave the same instructions to Noah. Man has disobeyed this command. Birth control at the present date is defiance flung into the face of the Almighty. God will eventually deal with the world for breaking the everlasting covenant which is described in Genesis 9:1-16. Because man has violated this everlasting covenant, the Lord will bring the great Tribulation upon the earth. (See Isaiah 24:5 and its connections.)

When Israel is brought back into fellowship with God, the earth will be populated and there will be plenty of room for everyone. The earth at that time will give its increase. Ideal conditions will prevail.

Concerning this future the Lord declares that He has not spoken in secret. He has given His message of love in plain terms, saying to Israel that she should seek Him. When she seeks Him, it will not be in vain. He speaks righteousness and declares correct things.

Invitation to the Lost

In verses 20-25 the prophet gave the universal invitation to those who survive the Tribulation to assemble themselves and consider the real status of things. Idolatry is nothing. Images shall pass away. God from the beginning has declared the course of history and conditions and things shall develop exactly as He has foretold.

Since fulfillment has proved the inerrancy and correctness of the message of God, He calls to those surviving the Tribulation saying, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Here is a universal call for all to look in faith to Him and accept Him in order that they might live. The Lord foretold that Israel—the remnant—"shall look unto me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son ..." (Zech. 12:10). The same idiom appears in both of these passages. The looking referred to in them is looking in faith to God for salvation. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ. There is no other way than this. Thus the necessity for the proclamation of the truth.

God has sworn by Himself, according to Isaiah 45:23, "... that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." In view of this time of universal recognition of God and homage to Him, the prophet for the Lord plead (in verse 22) for all to accept God's salvation.

There is salvation and righteousness only in Jehovah. He also has strength, for those who accept Him. From the New Testament we learn of the righteousness which He has provided for all who wish to accept. The most concise and fullest statement of this righteousness apart from the law is set forth in Romans 3:21-31. An examination of our passage in Isaiah and a comparison of it with Paul's statement in Romans reveals the fact that both the prophet and the Apostle were speaking of imputed righteousness which is given to all who believe.

"In Jehovah shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (vs. 25). Men cannot be justified by their good works or anything that they accomplish, have, or do. Only in Jehovah—Jehovah our righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ—can the seed of Israel be justified. Because of this fact, the truth of the gospel must be proclaimed, by those who have it and who know God's plan, to Israel now. May the Lord God stir our hearts and open our eyes to see His truth and may He give us moral and spiritual strength, power, and courage to put into practice now what we learn from His Word. The blessings of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rest upon all who know and who love Him.

BABYLON'S FINAL OVERTHROW AND ISRAEL'S COMPLETE DELIVERANCE BY HER MESSIAH

Chapters 46, 47, 48

As stated in former discussions in this series, Babylon, with all her might and power, lay in the background of the oracles found in Isaiah, chapters 40-48. Woven into the warp and woof of the revelation contained in chapters 41-46 is the deliverance of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity under the sovereignty of Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king. In chapters 47 and 48, however, the prophet was carried forward to the end of this age and saw Babylon the dominating world metropolis of this future time. But he was shown that it will be overthrown completely in one moment on a certain date. When this great catastrophe occurs, Israel's Messiah will save her. In anticipation, however, of this final deliverance, her expected but long-rejected Messiah issues a call for His people to leave Babylon before the overthrow and promises water and sustenance to them as they make their trek homeward across the barren deserts. A careful study of these two chapters reveals their unity and compactness. They therefore must be studied very carefully as a literary unit.

Along with these chapters one should carefully investigate Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14, and Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51, which portions of scripture blend prophecies of the fall of Babylon under the Medes and Persians with a forecast of her future overthrow, giving the greater part of their attention to the final catastrophe in the end of the Tribulation. An examination of these passages will show that the major part of them has never been fulfilled. Since God's Word is infallible, we may be certain that He will literally carry out the plan announced and the threat made, as they appear on the sacred page.

Babylon's Idolatry and the Occult World

Idolatry seems to have headed up in Babylon in the Patriarchal Period. As we read in Genesis, chapter 11, the kingdom of the world was headed up at the Tower of Babel, which was the very heart and center of the occult world. We are told that history moves in cycles. The present world civilization which thus began at Babylon will end there. Thus in the prophetic scriptures we see that idolatry and every phase of the occult world will head up and flourish in the Babylon of the future. The reader should peruse very carefully chapters 46 and 47, which we are studying in this installment. Especially in 47:1-7 we see idolatry. In verses 12-15 appears the occult world.

God Versus Idols

In 46:1,2 the prophet saw the idols of Babylon loaded upon the beasts of burden. These so-called gods, instead of aiding and assisting their devotees, were actual burdens to the dumb beasts. In these two verses we see them loaded on the animals and being carried off into captivity by the conquerors of Babylon, the Medes, and the Persians. Thus this oracle, chapters 46-48, which pertains largely to the Babylon of the end time and of the deliverance of Israel by her Messiah in the future, begins with this prediction which foretold the conquest of Babylon by the Medes and Persians.

In contrast with the idols of Babylon Isaiah held up the Almighty, the God of Israel, and showed what He does for His people. Hear him. "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, that have been borne *by me* from their birth, that have been carried from the womb; 4 and even to old age I am he, and even to hoar hairs I will carry *you*: I have made, and I will bear; yea, I will carry, and will deliver" (Isa. 46:3,4).

The God of Jacob is the one who has borne His people from of old. In these verses the prophet addressed "the remnant of the house of Israel." Isaiah was the prophet who emphasized the doctrine of the remnant, the minority of the nation that seeks God and His truth and that will obey Him, accepting Messiah with enthusiasm in the end time.

In these verses the prophet thought of the nation as an individual that was born at the time of the Exodus from Egyptian bondage. Thus Isaiah said through the prophet that the Lord has borne the nation from its birth to the time here

foreseen, will continue to carry it to old age, and will deliver it. The period of old age of the nation is undoubtedly the time of the end of this age. He promised to bear her, even to the hoar hairs, and to deliver her, which salvation we shall see in chapter 48.

Again, in verses 5-7, the prophet spoke of idols and showed the folly of making them. They are made by the hand of men and are impotent. One may cry unto an idol but it can never answer him. Neither can it save him out of his trouble. I realize that idolatry is backed by the demon world, as is set forth in Psalm 106:37,38. In Psalm 115:4-8 we have an excellent poetical description of idols and of their inability to speak, hear, or act. What is said in these passages concerning idols in general is true. There will be, however, one idol that will yet be made, that will speak, and that will be able to accomplish marvelous feats. This idol will be the image of the Antichrist, of which we read in Revelation 13:11-18. This image will be made of some material substance and will be set up in Jerusalem by the Antichrist and his aides in the middle of the Tribulation. Then by the power of the devil the second beast, the false prophet, will give life and power to it so that it will be able to talk and to back up its threats by actual deeds. Moses converted his rod into a living serpent by the power of God; the magicians of Egypt turned their rods into serpents by the might of the devil. By this same latter power will the false prophet convert the image of the Antichrist into a living, active person.

In contrast with the helpless idols of Babylon, Isaiah called upon the transgressors to remember and to call to mind the things of the past and to consider the fact that he had outlined the course of human events throughout the centuries to the end of time (vss. 8-11). In his appeal to these sinners the prophet, speaking for God, declared that the Almighty alone is God and that there is none like Him, "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure; calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country; yea, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it." Eternity, figuratively speaking, may be divided, in our thinking, into three sections: the part which antedated the creation of the material universe; time, that portion which runs its course during the period the material universe, which now exists, continues; and the ages of ages of the future, after the passing away of the material heavens and earth at the conclusion of the Millennium (Rev. 20:11).

Isaiah told us that God declares the end from the beginning. When I realize that eternity had no beginning nor any ending, I know that the prophet was speaking of that part of it which we call time. Thus from the very beginning of the creation, God declared the course of the events of the ages during time. (For a clearer understanding of this subject, see *The World's Greatest Library Graphically Illustrated* by David L. Cooper.) Time had a beginning and it will have an ending. We may know therefore that this is what Isaiah was talking about. There can be little doubt that God announced to the angelic hosts his purposes in the creation of the universe. This inference may be drawn from the statement, "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7). Throughout the centuries God has revealed ahead of time to His servants the prophets what they might expect (Amos 3:7). In God's outlining the future course of events, He had spoken of Cyrus as the one from the east whom He would raise up and who would bring to pass His plans and carry out His purposes (vss. 10,11).

Isaiah, in the two closing verses of chapter 46, declared, "Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: 13 I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry; and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory" (vss. 12,13).

Again addressing the transgressors, or the stouthearted, who were far from righteousness, the prophet announced that God would bring near His salvation, that it would not tarry, and that "... I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory." The marginal rendering of this passage in the Revised Version is *give salvation in Zion, and my glory unto Israel*. Both translations are grammatically correct and both convey the thought that was intended by the prophet. When this passage is viewed in the light of related ones, one immediately sees that the salvation of which the Lord was speaking

and the glory which He foretold are those which will be brought to Israel at the second coming of our Lord. When the time arrives for Him to take the situation of Israel in hand, He will not tarry. He will speed the tempo of events and accomplish His purposes in short order. Malachi was speaking of the same event—the second coming of the Messiah—in 3:1-6 of his prophecy. When the Lord thus comes, all Israel living at the time will be saved and glory will be placed in Zion for Israel His glory. Then the Chosen People will no longer be the tail of the nations as they are now; but, on the contrary, they will be the head.

The Future Overthrow of Babylon

In chapter 47 the prophet looked forward from the conquest of Babylon by the Medes and Persians in the days of Cyrus, as we have seen in chapter 46 to the end of this age when Babylon will arise from the dust of the past and will be the metropolis of all nations. In the first eleven verses of this chapter the prophet thought of Babylon as a young lady. He therefore addressed her saying, "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon ..." Cities and nations are represented by women, as we see in different places in the Scriptures. For instance, in Psalm 45 the nations during the Millennial Age are thought of as "ladies in waiting" at an earthly court. Thus Miss Tyre—converted and in fellowship with God—will be one of these. So will all the nations be. But in the passage which we are now studying, Babylon is thought of as a virgin daughter, in the prime of her life, looking out into the future with great expectation and hope. She is delicately arrayed, has everything for which the heart could wish. She has never known want nor care. She is "the mistress of kingdoms." To her the prophet gives a message, telling her to come down from her throne, to lay aside her costly elegant garments, and to begin to work like any servant, doing the menial things of life. "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and will spare no man" (vs. 3). She is told, "Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans; for thou shalt no more be called The mistress of kingdoms" (vs. 5).

Between these two verses which I have just quoted, the prophet injected this august declaration: "Our Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel" (vs. 4). The prophet, seeing this future situation and realizing what Babylon has done to Israel in the past and what she will yet in the future do to the Chosen People, looked, in the middle of his oracle, toward the heavens and expressed the thought that the Holy One of Israel, who cannot tolerate sin and wickedness, is Jehovah of armies and that He is Israel's Redeemer. He therefore will deliver them from the worst tyranny and oppression of all the ages.

In verses 6 and 7 the prophet showed that God was indignant against His people and gave them into the hands of Babylon because of their sins. Babylon should have showed mercy upon the aged and should have been tolerant. Instead of her taking this attitude, she became tyrannical and oppressive. She, in the future being absorbed with her own riches, her prestige, and power, will be intolerant and will not remember the latter end—that which will come upon her in the end time when God arises, shakes mightily the earth, and delivers His people Israel. "8 Now therefore hear this, thou that art given to pleasures, that sittest securely, that sayest in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: 9 but these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: in their full measure shall they come upon thee, in the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments" (vss. 8,9).

The complacency and sense of security of Babylon when she becomes mistress of the kingdoms of the world are set forth in these verses. She will feel that everything is in her own hands and that no calamity will ever overtake her. In other words, she will be imbued with the idea that she is living in the era when there is a permanent peace, and that she is powerful enough to dominate the entire world. She will have no idea that any reverses or fortune can overtake her. Thus she will say, "I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children." Nevertheless, the very thing which she says will never overtake her will come upon her suddenly—in a moment, in one day's time. That Babylon never did suffer such a fate as this is evident from her history. Though she was great and powerful in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, she had

a gradual decline over a number of centuries and was in existence at the time when Peter wrote his epistles (I Pet. 5:13). Since no catastrophic judgment has ever overthrown her in the past and since the Word of God is infallibly inspired, we may be certain that she will rise again to the highest pinnacle of human power and authority and that suddenly, in a moment, on a given day this calamity here foretold will overtake her. When we read this prediction in the light of Revelation, chapter 18, we can understand our passage better. (One must not confound Revelation, chapter 17, with chapter 18. The former deals with the overthrow of Babylon the harlot—the ecclesiasticism of the end time—which occurs in the middle of the Tribulation, whereas chapter 18 foretells literal Babylon which will rise from the dust and be the dominating city of the world in the end time.)

Verse 10 is quite illuminating. "For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me; thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thy heart, I am, and there is none else besides me." Babylon will trust in wickedness. She will discredit the idea that there is an omniscient God who looks upon the world and its inhabitants and who knows everything. Moreover, her wisdom and knowledge will make her conceited. Knowledge—human learning—puffs up, whereas love edifies or builds up. Pride goeth before a fall. Babylon and her conceited rulers will feel that they are the only ones and that the rest of humanity are nothing but chattel or slaves.

That the overthrow of Babylon will be unexpected and catastrophic is clear from the following verse: "Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know the dawning thereof: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it away: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou knowest not" (vs. 11).

The Occult World

In verses 12-15 we see a very clear picture of the various methods of attempting to learn the future. The Babylonians, from the beginning of the ancient kingdom, believed in enchantments, sorceries, star-gazing, astrology, fortune-telling, and the like. This is clear from the tablets which have been unearthed in old Chaldea. These ancient methods of the occult world will be brought into full vogue and operation in the end time. The prophets, foretelling the complete and sudden overthrow of the Babylonians, challenged her to invite all her fortune-tellers, star-gazers, and prognosticators to reveal the future concerning her fate as he had done. The inference of the challenge is that they will not be able to give her any light as to the future. There is such a thing as fortune-telling, which is accomplished by the power of demons and Satan himself, but those who thus are in contact with the demon world are limited by the Lord Almighty and cannot reveal things as the Lord does. They are limited by the power of the Almighty. God has always hated every effort to unravel the future by fortune-tellers, astrologers, and the like. No Christian can afford to have any part or lot with anything that borders on the occult. If one wishes to know anything authoritatively, let him go to the sacred, holy, infallible Word of God and there see what the Lord has said. He has revealed the things which He wants us to know. If He has not spoken upon any subject, then we should not attempt to get information from any other source. "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them" (Isa. 8:20).

The Appearance of King Messiah, Israel's Redeemer and Deliverer

Having foretold in chapter 47 the sudden and complete overthrow of Babylon, which, as we have seen, will occur in the end time, Isaiah then, in chapter 48:1-16, gave us a picture of Messiah when He appears the first time in fulfillment of the predictions of Moses and the Prophets. In these verses the prophet impersonated Messiah at the time of His first coming. Having made the revelation found in these verses, the prophet ceased His impersonation and then, in verses 17-19, spoke as an ambassador from God, introducing his oracle with the usual formula, "Thus saith Jehovah ..." In making

the revelation of these three verses, he represented himself as an ambassador sent by the rejected Messiah to Israel and told her what a fatal mistake she made in rejecting Him. Finally, in the last three verses of this oracle, the rejected Messiah looked forward to the end of the age, saw many Jewish people residing in Babylon. He therefore called upon them to go forth from the city—before its destruction—and to declare to the ends of the earth this message, "Jehovah, has redeemed his servant Jacob." In verse 21 he promised that God will provide streams in the desert for His fleeing people who become flaming evangels of the redemption of Israel. The oracle closes with this terrific warning, "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the wicked."

As has been noted from time to time in this series of expositions, the prophets frequently impersonated either Jehovah the Father or Jehovah the Son. In the first sixteen verses of this chapter Isaiah impersonated the Son at His first coming. The reason for this interpretation is that, though the prophet used the personal pronouns, I, me, my, and mine, he, nor any other man, could do what is affirmed. A further examination of this passage shows that what is declared in this oracle is that which is accomplished by Messiah at His first coming. These facts may be seen by a careful study of the passage.

In verse 1 Messiah addresses the people of Israel who are come forth out of the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of Jehovah and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth. The lives of people must be correct and correspond with their profession. Israel's claiming to be of the holy city and at the same time not living in accordance with truth and righteousness does not make the people indeed and in truth children of God (vs. 2).

According to verse 3 the Messiah is the one who has spoken through the prophets of old and who has, when the time for the fulfillment of any specific prediction arrives, performed it suddenly. That the spirit of Christ was speaking through the Old Testament prophets is seen from I Peter 1:10-12.

Messiah has known all along the condition of Israel's heart—that she has been rebellious and stiff-necked (Isa. 48:4,5), even as Moses declared (Deut. 29:2-4). Knowing that the people would make false claims in regard to idols and their ability to foretell events, the Messiah, through the prophets, foretold the principal events of history so that there would be no excuse for any Israelite's saying that his idol had made these truths known.

In verse 6 we have this language: "Thou hast heard it; behold all this; and ye, will ye not declare it? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, which thou hast not known." Israel has heard the messages of the prophets. Messiah calls her attention to this fact and asks her will she not declare it or confess it, that is, admit that it is He who has spoken truthfully and correctly through the prophets. The last statement of verse 6 reads as follows: "I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, which thou hast not known." The marginal reading of "I have showed" is "*I show thee ...*" The trend of thought demands our acceptance of the footnote rather than the text rendering. This fact is evident when one sees that Messiah, looking backward and having told what He has said in the past, now proposes to make new disclosures. He volunteers to tell them things that have never been known—things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world. The church and the Christian Dispensation were clearly revealed by the Old Testament prophets, but the details of the present spiritual and political setup of the age were indeed withheld from them. In other words, the new setup under the spiritual reign of King Messiah was not revealed to the Old Testament prophets; but when Messiah comes in fulfillment of this prophecy, He makes new disclosures of truth. In this connection one should study the article on the exposition of Matthew, chapter 13, for a fuller discussion on this point.

When Messiah appears in fulfillment of this prediction, He creates something new in the world. This is set forth in the following verse: "They are created now, and not from of old; and before this day thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them." When one reads this verse in the light of its fulfillment in the New Testament, one

immediately comes to the conclusion that this new thing which is created when Messiah comes is none other than the spiritual kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the church of God.

In verse 8 Messiah reverts to the theme which He mentions in verses 4 and 5, namely, that Israel has not had a heart receptive to the truth from the very beginning. "Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from of old thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou didst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." Men can close their eyes, stop their ears, and harden their hearts against the truth. On the other hand, they can take an attitude that is favorable toward truth and can desire to know the will of God. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from myself" (John 7:17). "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

When Israel, according to this prediction, refuses to hear the Messiah upon His appearance in her midst, He has just cause to be angry and to blot her out of existence. But He refuses to do this and declares, "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off (vs. 9).

Though Messiah does not cut off His beloved people because of their rejection of Him and His message, He holds on to them and will make them pass through the furnace of affliction and will refine them as silver is refined: "Behold, I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (vs. 10). In the past God has refined the nation, purging out the sinners and the wicked ones from her, but He has never subjected her to the purging process similar to that of refining silver. He does declare, however, that He will yet do this in the future. The furnace of affliction, where she will be refined, is none other than the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), the time of Israel's affliction and trouble—the great Tribulation Period.

The speaker, King Messiah, declares, "I am he; I am the first, I also am the last" (vs. 12). Thus this one claims to be divine, God himself. He had no beginning; neither will He have any ending. In fact, He speaks of Himself, declaring, "I am he." He is the absolute, unchangeable One. (See Deut. 32:39.) Moreover, according to verse 13, Messiah is the one who laid the foundation of the earth and whose right hand has spread abroad the heavens. When He finished creation, He did not turn His back upon it, but has complete control and authority over the entire universe. Hence He declares, "When I call unto them they stand up together." In this sentence the various constellations and planets are thought of as soldiers. Messiah assumes the attitude of a general toward them. Thus when He issues His orders, everything in the universe stands at attention, listening to His commands.

Messiah then, in verse 14, calls for an ideal assembly of the peoples of earth and asks, "Who among them hath declared these things?" There is no one who can answer or take up the challenge thrown out by this question. Continuing the Messiah declares, "He whom Jehovah loveth shall perform his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be on* the Chaldeans." He is the one whom Jehovah in heaven loves. Thus He states that He will perform His pleasure on Babylon.

Verse 15 is somewhat difficult of interpretation: "I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him; I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous." Who is the speaker in this verse? Is it Messiah? If so, who is referred to by the pronouns *he* and *him*? The most probable interpretation of this difficult verse is the following: In the midst of Messiah's declaration regarding His performing the pleasure of the Almighty against the Chaldeans, God the Father speaks from heaven, showing His sanction and approval of all that Messiah does and says. Such a sudden and dramatic interruption in the speech may be illustrated by the baptismal scene of the Lord Jesus Christ. After Jesus was baptized and was coming up out of the water, the heavens were opened and a voice from God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (See Matt. 3:13-17.) Anyone can understand this dramatic interruption on the part of the Father. For one to understand that Isaiah 48:15 is a similar situation is to unlock the door to the prophecy. When Messiah speaks in the latter part of verse 14, stating that He has appeared to perform the Almighty's pleasure against the Babylonians, then the voice

from heaven chimes in saying, "I, even I, have spoken ..." The I in this passage therefore is none other than God the Father, who assures the world that He has brought the Messiah forth and that He, Messiah, shall make His own way prosperous—under the blessing and guidance of God the Father.

The prophet closes his impersonation of King Messiah with these words: "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; from the beginning I have not spoken in secret; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me, and his Spirit." (Isa. 48:16).

Thus Messiah invites the people of Israel to come near to Him and to listen to His message, which is that He has not spoken in secret at any time, when He was inspiring the prophets. He has been present in the minds and hearts of the prophets from of old and has been speaking through them. He then concludes by stating that "... and now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me, and his Spirit." Messiah therefore, when He comes in fulfillment of this prediction, tells the people that God the Father has sent Him, the Son—the Messiah—and also the Holy Spirit. Here is the clear, plain teaching concerning the Holy Trinity. There is but one Divine Being or essence, which is God, but there are three personalities subsisting in this one divine essence.

A Message to Israel from Her Rejected Messiah

With verse 16 the prophet ceased his impersonation. His doing this might be interpreted as a prophecy that when Messiah comes in fulfillment of this prediction, He will disappear from the scene of action. When one studies the whole case in the light of the actual fulfillment, one sees that, when Messiah did come in fulfillment of this prediction and did accomplish His life's work, He disappeared from earthly scenes, ascending to the right hand of God the Father on high.

Following the impersonation, the prophet changed his form of address and presented himself to his audience as an ambassador of the rejected Messiah, who has disappeared. Then speaking for Him, Israel's Redeemer and Holy One, he declared, "I am Jehovah thy God, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the grains thereof: his name would not be cut off nor destroyed from before me." As the representative of the rejected and departed Messiah, the prophet quoting Him said, "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! ..." This is an expression of regret that Israel had not accepted Him when He came. If she had done so, her peace would have flowed like a river and her righteousness would have been like the waves of the sea. In short, the history of the Jewish nation would have been entirely different from what it has been if she had accepted her Messiah when He appeared nineteen hundred years ago.

Messiah's Call for Israel to Leave Babylon

Messiah sees Babylon standing as the world metropolis in the end time. At that season many Jews will be residing in this commercial center. He sends His message to them to leave the doomed city, obeying the following injunction "... with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth: say ye, Jehovah hath redeemed his servant Jacob" (vs. 20). Thus the Jews of Babylon are, summoned to leave it and to tell their brethren as well as the world that the time has come for Jehovah to redeem His servant Jacob, the Jews.

According to verse 21, the Lord will provide streams in the desert (literally) for His fleeing people who start their long trek back to the land of their fathers.

This section of the Book of Isaiah, chapters 40-48, closes with this refrain: "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the wicked." There has never been peace for the evildoers, neither shall there ever be. Certainly the wicked shall go off into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. It is a terrible thing to be wicked. Sin never pays. There is only one

way to live, and that is for God, accepting the Lord Jesus Christ and becoming a new creature in Him, serving and honoring Him through life, and being received into immortal glory eventually.

THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH AND ISRAEL'S RESTORATION

Chapters 49-57

Chapter 49

As has been noted before in this series of expositions, Isaiah, chapters 40-48, constitute a separate unit of prophecies, which have for their background the restoration of the captives from Babylonian exile under the orders of Cyrus and of Israel's future deliverance from Babylon, which will be restored in the end time. The next general literary unit of this part of Isaiah consists of chapters 49-57. There are six discourses in this section, all of which cluster around the general thought regarding the servant of Jehovah—the Messiah of Israel, the Lord, Jesus Christ. For our study this month we shall examine chapter 49, which constitutes a separate unit.

The Prophet's Impersonation of King Messiah

49 Listen, O isles, unto me: and hearken, ye peoples, from far: Jehovah hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name: 2 and he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me: and he hath made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he kept me close: 3 and he said unto me, Thou art my servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 4 But I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity; yet surely the justice *due to me* is with Jehovah, and my recompense with my God. 5 And now saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, and that Israel be gathered unto him (for I am honorable in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God is become my strength); 6 yea, he saith, It *is* too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (Isa. 49:1-6.)

As has been noted on former occasions, the term, servant, as it is used in Isaiah, has three connotations. Only by the facts of each immediate context, can one determine which meaning our term has in a given case. In a certain context it refers to the entire nation of Israel, both the good and the bad. In other connections it refers to the faithful remnant of the nation. In still other connections it signifies the Messiah, the deliverer of the nation. In verse 3 of our chapter the speaker declares that the Lord God has spoken to him and said, "Thou art my servant; Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Immediately we see that this passage is a prediction concerning the servant. But what is the connotation? It can neither refer to the nation nor to the remnant, for this servant is appointed of God to raise up the remnant and to restore the preserved of Israel. In view of this fact we see that it refers to the Messiah; no other interpretation can be possible.

The prophet appeared before his audience and in the message of these verses spoke of himself as *I*, *me*, and *my*. This fact, as we have often seen, shows that he was impersonating the Messiah. With this understanding, we shall now notice the message of these verses.

Messiah, in beginning His message, calls upon the isles, the peoples of earth, to listen and to hearken to Him, declaring that the Lord Jehovah had called Him "from the womb; from the bowels of my mother" had He made mention of His name. An examination of messianic prophecy reveals that, whenever any mention is made of the Messiah's parentage, only the mother is spoken of. This fact in and of itself does not prove the virgin birth of Messiah; nevertheless it is in perfect alignment with the prediction of His unique entrance into the world. "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). Scripture always harmonizes. Thus Isaiah 49:1 perfectly dovetails into the prediction regarding the virgin birth.

In verse 2 the Messiah declares that the Lord has made His mouth like a sharp sword, that He has hidden Him in His hand, that He has made Him a polished shaft; and that He has kept Him in His quiver. These words must be taken seriously.

They stand for reality and are by no means draperies to adorn the prophecy. In the first place Messiah declares that God has made His mouth like a sharp sword. What does this signify? Does it refer to the message of grace and truth which He, when He appears upon the historic scene, proclaims to the meek and lowly? Instantly one replies with a most emphatic negative. The gospel message is an expression of kindness, grace, love, mercy. Thus in no wise could we interpret it as a reference to the ministry of the Lord at His first coming. Could it refer to what He will accomplish at His return? As we learn from parallel passages, we know that the Lord will return in wrath and indignation. At that time He "... will go forth as a mighty man [a man of war]; he will stir up *his* zeal like a man of war: he will cry, yea; he will shout aloud; he will do mightily against his enemies" (Isa. 42:13). In this quotation appears a prediction that the Messiah, when He returns at the end of the Tribulation, will come as a mighty warrior with the battle cry of vengeance against His enemies, whom He will slay as He purges the world of all wickedness and sin. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that in 49:2 Messiah asserts that God has made Him "a polished shaft," an arrow which He has hid—during the present dispensation—in the shadow of His hand and in His quiver. Messiah is God's polished shaft and His arrow which He at that time shoots, at the wicked world. Of course this is a figurative expression which is perfectly clear to all.

When Messiah is upon earth the first time, He delivers a great message of grace and truth to the people. After His rejection, crucifixion, and resurrection, He ascends to the right hand of God and is invisible from then and onward so far as the world is concerned. In the language of our passage He, the polished shaft, the arrow, has been hidden in the shadow of God's hand or placed in the quiver. The facts thus stated are apparent to anyone who will study this passage in the light of those which give the whole redemptive career of King Messiah, which consists of the two comings, separated by the period during which He is at the right hand of the throne of God. For instance, see Psalm 110.

According to verse 3 of our passage the prophet in impersonating Messiah tells us what God said to Him, namely, that He is His servant and that He will be glorified in the world through Him. The Lord was not glorified in the world through Moses—except in a very limited way. What is said of him may be said of all the faithful men of God of old. At Messiah's first coming God is glorified in the world in a limited manner, but at His second coming the picture will be entirely different; for at that time God will be completely glorified in and through Him throughout the world.

When God the Father tells Messiah that it is His intention to glorify Himself in the world through Him, the Messiah replies saying, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity; yet [nevertheless] surely the justice *due* to me is with Jehovah, and my recompense with my God" (vs. 4). This conversation between God the Father and God the Son is held after God the Son has come to earth, has spent His labor in an effort to get Israel to accept Him and the truth, but has seemingly failed—so far as the conversion of the nation is concerned. We may therefore place this conversation between the two comings of Messiah—after He has ascended from earth to the right hand of the Majesty on High, and before He returns and establishes His kingdom upon earth. As suggested just above, so far as the conversion of the entire nation of Israel is concerned and His leading it back to God, His personal ministry at His first coming has been for naught and in vain. When we look at prophecies concerning this first coming and then look at the fulfillment in the life and labors of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see that, while He failed nationally to convert the Hebrews, He does lead many to a saving knowledge of Himself. The number, however, which He leads into this fellowship with Himself is very small in comparison with the entire nation. This fact justifies Messiah's using the statement, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity ..." —the relative sense of language.

Although Messiah complains concerning the comparatively small results accruing from His life's work, He is confident that His labors are not in vain; for He declares that the justice due to Him is with Jehovah and the recompense with His God. This fact confirms the interpretation just placed upon the first part of the verse, namely, that the prophet is using the language relatively and not in the absolute sense of the term. The latter part of the verse may be interpreted in the

light of Isaiah 53:11: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied ..." The Messiah will get His reward for His labors in due time.

According to verses 5 and 6 of our passage, the Lord, at the time of the conversation between Himself and the Messiah, tells the Son that the task of bringing back the remnant to God and restoring the preserved of Israel is a task too small and insignificant for Him. He therefore lays before Him a larger ministry which is that of becoming a light to all the Gentile nations. When a person realizes that one soul is of more value in God's sight than the entire material universe, he wonders why the Father says to the Son that the restoration of Israel is such a small task for Him. The parenthetical expression—"for I am honorable in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God is become my strength"—may throw some light upon the question. Messiah, who is the God-man as we learn from many passages of scripture, is indeed honorable in the eyes of Jehovah and God gives Him unlimited strength and power. Being such a one and having all the power of Deity in His own hands, He is in a position not only to save the remnant of Israel, but to be God's light and salvation to every mortal upon the earth. When He returns, coming as the polished shaft and as the arrow of God's wrath, He will become, as we learn from parallel passages, God's salvation to all nations. Messiah therefore in these verses envisages a converted world with all the attendant blessings. This will occur at the second coming of our Lord, and these conditions will continue throughout His millennial reign.

Special Message of Confirmation Regarding Messiah's Reign

"Thus saith Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall worship; because of Jehovah that is faithful, *even* the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee" (49:7).

This verse has been, called Isaiah, chapter 53 "in miniature." With verse 6 the prophet ceases his impersonation of Messiah and adopts the method of representing himself as the ambassador of the Almighty. In verse 7 he informs Israel what the Father has said to the Son—after His rejection by them. Isaiah represents his message as that which came from Jehovah, the Redeemer, and His Holy One, to Messiah, after He is rejected of men. He thus informs us that God made the following revelation "to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers." Messiah is spoken of as the one whom man despiseth. This is a general term indicating man in his unregenerated state. The unsaved man does not have the proper evaluation of Messiah and His labors for mankind. He therefore in this sense despises the Redeemer. But concerning the nation of Israel, the prophet quotes the Father as saying that it abhorreth Him (Messiah). There is not only an under-evaluation of Messiah, but there is on the part of the nation of Israel a positively hostile attitude toward Him. Moreover, the prophet speaks of Messiah as "a servant of rulers." When the Lord Jesus came here, He said that He did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. It is in Him that we live, and move, and have our being. He has served, is serving, and will continue to serve, not only the rulers of the world, but all men. He is therefore called in this passage "a servant of rulers."

Now for the message which the Father speaks to the rejected Son: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall worship; because of Jehovah that is faithful, *even* the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee." This prediction looks forward to the time when the kings and rulers, the princes of earth, will see the truth concerning Messiah and will also actually see Him in person as the King of kings and Lord of lords—at His second coming; Then with holy reverence and awe they will arise and do obeisance to him. In so doing, they will accept Him as their Lord and Saviour, the rightful ruler of the earth. What is said of the kings and rulers will also be true of all men, who will accept Him as Saviour and worship Him as their God.

The guarantee that Messiah will thus be recognized by all is the word of Jehovah to Him to this effect. God is faithful to His promises and true to His Word. Since He tells Messiah that He, the Father, will overrule and bring about conditions

that all men, including the rulers, will arise, accept Him, and worship, He will carry out this promise literally. For this purpose God the Father has chosen the Son and will see that He, the God-man, thus is enthroned as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Messiah's Regathering Israel

"8 Thus saith Jehovah, In an acceptable time have I answered thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages; 9 saying to them that are bound, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and on all bare heights shall be their pasture. 10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them will lead them, even by springs of water will he guide them. 11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. 12 Lo, these shall come from far; and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. 13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth: and break forth into singing, O mountains: for Jehovah hath comforted his people, and will have compassion upon his afflicted" (Isa. 49:8-13).

In this section of our chapter we see what the Father says to the Son while He is still upon earth at His first coming. The reason for this interpretation is that He tells Him of His having heard Him in an acceptable time and that He will preserve Him and make Him a covenant of the people. Such language shows that Messiah, during His earthly ministry, prays to the Father, who answers His petition and who also assures Him that He will continue to be with Him at all times.

The Father states that Messiah is to be the covenant bringing the people of Israel back to God. This is a repetition of the promise of chapter 42:6. Not only will Messiah be the means of bringing the remnant of the nation back to fellowship with God, but He will raise up the land and make the Jews to inherit it, which is now desolate. At that time He will lift the curse. The debris of centuries will be removed or covered and the country will be like the Garden of Eden (Num. 24:6; Isa. 51:3).

At that time Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, will regather His flock, providing all things that are necessary for them as they make their trek back to the land of their fathers (vss. 9,10). Ways will be opened through all mountain ranges so that they can return. According to verses 12 and 13 Israel will be gathered back from the four points of the compass. The Chinese Jews are mentioned in verse 12—"and these from the land of Sinim." Other prophets foretell this world-wide regathering of Israel.

Jehovah's Unchanging Love for Zion and Its People

"But Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me. 15 Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee. 16 Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me" (49:14-16).

Notwithstanding the promise made by Moses and all the prophets that God would regather Israel in the end of this age back to her own land, the people of Zion have, as we see from these verses, reached the conclusion that God has cast them off and has forsaken them. In my conversations with many Jews I have heard this very thought expressed. Unfortunately many of their leaders have set schedules for the Lord to follow. They have been disappointed from time to time. Hence their faith in God's love for them has largely collapsed. Such is the prediction of these verses and such we find true on every hand in Israel.

But no sane, normal mother can forget her infant child. To love her offspring is the usual thing for the normal mother. In assuring Israel of His care for her, the Lord declares that mothers may forget their young but that He can under no

conditions forget them. Zion, as it were, is graven upon the palms of His hands, and her walls are ever before Him. When the time arrives for Him to fulfill His promises, the Lord will arise and have mercy upon His people. (Ps. 102:12-14).

A Vision of Israel's Regathering

"17 Thy children make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth from thee. 18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together and come to thee. As I live saith Jehovah, thou shall surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and gird thyself with them, like a bride. 19 For, as for thy waste and thy desolate places, and thy land that hath been destroyed, surely now shall thou be too strait for the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. 20 The children of thy bereavement shall yet say in thine ears, The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell. 21 Then shalt thou say in thy heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have been bereaved of my children, and am solitary, an exile, and wandering to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where were they?" (Isa. 49:17-21).

In these verses Zion, Jerusalem, is thought of as a mother who has been, bereaved of her children and who has been sitting in solitude, because they have not been with her for a long time. She lifts up her eyes and sees them coming from all directions (vss. 17,18). In the latter part of verse 18 Isaiah changes his figure and speaks of the returning Jews as if they were a garment with which Zion, thought of as the bereaved mother, clothes herself. When Israel thus returns, the quarters as they now exist will be too small. Other arrangements must be made—and they will be, according to the prophetic word.

Zion's children of this period of her bereavement—the Christian Dispensation—are here represented as coming to her in the future as children around the mother and speaking into her ears. She is pictured as being amazed at their number and asking various questions concerning them. The reunion will be indeed a happy one. Thus in this touching pictorial manner, the prophet foretells the regathering of Israel.

The Nations Assisting in Israel's Restoration

"22 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the nations, and set up my ensign to the peoples; and they shall bring, thy sons in their bosom, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. 23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah; and they that wait for me shall not be put to shame" (Isa. 49:22,23).

According to these verses the kings and the rulers of earth will assist Israel in her return. Then these dignitaries of the nations, being converted and realizing the position which Israel in the great Kingdom Age will occupy, will willingly become servants of the Jews. As we learn in other places, the converted Hebrews will be the priests and ministers of our God, whereas the Gentiles will be their servants (Isa. 61:5,6). Of course these kings and Gentiles of whom mention is made will be those who will be in the flesh as we now are; but we, the church of Jesus Christ, will have our glorified bodies and will reign with Him, assisting Him in the administration of this righteous rule all over the world.

Jehovah's Snatching Israel From the Clutches of Her Enemies

"24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captives be delivered? 25 But thus saith Jehovah, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. 26 And I will feed them that oppress

thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (Isa. 49:24-26).

In the very end of this dispensation Israel will be under the heel of tyranny. Many of them will be held as captives, but Jehovah promises to deliver them, breaking their shackles, and giving them the liberty for which their souls yearn. At that time the tables will be turned and all will know that Jehovah is the Saviour and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

ANOTHER PICTURE OF THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH—KING MESSIAH

Chapter 50

In the second half of Isaiah, as we have seen heretofore, the servant of Jehovah, King Messiah, occupies the central position on the stage. As has been noted on previous occasions, whenever the word "servant" appears in Isaiah, one knows that it refers either to Israel as a nation, to the faithful remnant of the nation, or to King Messiah. The facts of each context are to determine its meaning in a given case. When we examine closely the passage which we are now to study—chapter 50—we see that the servant is distinguished from the nation and abandons it temporarily. Moreover, a close study of the prediction shows that the characteristics of an individual are in evidence throughout. This one therefore is the Messiah of Israel.

The Message of Jehovah the Rejected Servant After Israel is Put Away (vss. 1-3)

50 Thus saith Jehovah, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, wherewith I have put her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities were ye sold, and for your transgressions was your mother put away. 2 Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink, because there is no water, and die for thirst. 3 I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering" (Isa. 50:1-3).

In the first verse we read, "Thus saith Jehovah ..." Repeatedly, we have seen that the word "Jehovah" in the mouth of the prophet has one of four connotations: In certain contexts the term refers to God the Father; in others, to God the Son; in other connections, to Jehovah the Holy Spirit; and in still other connections, it indicates the Holy Trinity. The facts of each context must determine its usage in a given case. When one reads and studies these verses carefully, one sees that this Jehovah, who is doing the speaking, has come to Israel and called upon her to forsake her wickedness, but she does not do that. His coming and calling is prior to this message. Which person of the Holy Trinity comes to Israel and calls her to repentance? When we examine parallel passages, we see that it is none other than King Messiah, Jehovah the Son. We may be certain therefore that the Jehovah of these verses is Jehovah the Son, the Messiah of Israel.

Jehovah the Son therefore is sending this message through Isaiah the prophet to the Jewish nation. That this is true is evident from the fact that in the preceding chapter (49) Jerusalem is represented by a mother and the Jewish people are considered as her children. This same figure is brought over into the discourse constituting chapter 50. The prophet therefore addresses the nation and asks it to produce the bill of divorcement which he had given to Jerusalem, their mother. A second query is, "... which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?" These rhetorical questions demand the answer that Jehovah has not done either of the things mentioned. He has not divorced the mother city with her children, her inhabitants. He has not sold her into slavery in order to procure money. The thing for which she and her children have been sold is the iniquities and transgressions of the people. Thus when this message is given to the people, the mother of Israel, on account of the transgression and sins of the people, has been sold and has been put away. Iniquity and wrongdoing always separate a person or a group of people from God—whenever the individuals fail to repent of the wrong and to confess it.

From verse 2 we learn that Jehovah, the Messiah, who sends this message has already visited Israel, has left her to her fate, and has returned to heaven. It is clear from this passage and others that this Jehovah has sustained a very close relationship with the nation, which is represented by the marriage vow. His ceasing to acknowledge this relationship and His withdrawing fellowship from her for the time being might, by some, be understood as being equivalent to a legal divorcement, but the speaker immediately assures the Hebrew people, the children of Zion, that, though He has separated

from His wife temporarily, He has not instituted legal proceedings for a divorcement. He therefore challenges the Jewish people to produce such a document showing that He has divorced Jerusalem, His wife. (In this connection let us remember that this one who is speaking is Jehovah, who came to the earth and Israel refused to hear Him upon His visit. This Jehovah, as we have already seen, is Jehovah the Messiah. He it is who is the husband of Israel. There is no conflict between this representation and that which is found in the New Testament, where the church is said to be the "bride" of Christ. The New Testament union between Christ and the church is of a higher and more spiritual order than that between Him and Israel. There is therefore no conflict between the teachings of the two Testaments.)

The Messiah would not put Israel away by divorcing her. This thought is set forth very beautifully by Hosea and his wife, Gomer. After the marriage, she proved unfaithful to the prophet. He therefore put her away but did not divorce her and awaited the time when she would cease from her sinful ways. After that he took her back to himself in holy wedlock. Thus the spirit of the prophet with his unfaithful wife is set forth to picture to us Israel's unfaithfulness to Jehovah, her Messiah.

In verse 2 the Messiah asks Israel why there was no man who responded when He called her at the time of which the message speaks, namely, His first coming. The language is very specific—"Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?" When we view this rhetorical question in the light of its fulfillment, we see that there were some in Israel who did accept Messiah and became His most ardent followers. But the number who received Him was so very small in comparison with the nation that, relatively speaking, Messiah could say that there was no one who gave heed. That the Bible does use relative language is clear from such a passage as Matthew, chapter 3. Here we read that all Jerusalem and Judaea went to John and were baptized by him. Matthew's statement is that *all* the people did it. Nevertheless, we are told in Luke 7:29 that the Pharisees and the lawyers "rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him." Relatively speaking, the bulk of the nation did accept John's message and submitted to his baptism, but there was a small minority that did not. One must look at all the facts of a given statement in order to determine whether or not the passage is to be interpreted absolutely or relatively. We are, however, to understand every statement absolutely unless there are facts which indicate that the writer used relative language. In view of this usage and in view of the light of the historical fulfillment, we know that Isaiah saw that comparatively few of the nation would accept Messiah when He would appear.

Moreover, Messiah asked Israel, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?" These rhetorical questions demand in answer an emphatic denial. God's hand has not lost any of its power. He is as able to save today as He was when man was created. All power in heaven and in earth is given to Him. He can redeem and can deliver.

As proof that He can deliver, not having lost any of His power, He calls attention to the fact that "... at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink, because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." He not only is the God of creation, but He is the God who is controlling all nature and directing the course of human history. It is in Him that we live, move, and have our continual existence. Thus this omnipotent Creator and Preserver of the universe reminds the nation of Israel, after she has rejected Him, that He has put away Jerusalem, the mother of the nation, temporarily—because of the sins of the people, but this separation is not permanent. It is only temporary. The Messiah is awaiting the time when Israel, being taught the enormity of her sin of rejecting Him, will confess this national transgression, will turn from it, and will return to Him wholeheartedly, accepting Him enthusiastically. When she does this, He will return and enter into covenant relationship with His beloved people again and make Jerusalem the joy and praise of all the earth.

The Care of Jehovah, The Father of The Messiah
During His Earthly Life (vss. 4-9)

"4 The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught. 5 The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. 6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7 For the Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. 8 He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand up together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. 9 Behold, the Lord Jehovah will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? behold, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (Isa. 50:4-9).

As has been noted above, the first three verses which we have been studying give us a picture of Jerusalem with her children after Messiah has put her away. The actual date when she, like Hagar, was sent forth into "the wilderness of the peoples" was 70 A.D., when God allowed the Roman armies under Titus to capture Jerusalem and to disperse the peoples of Israel throughout the world. But verses 4-9 are from a different standpoint. An examination of them shows that they present a picture of the Messiah during His earthly sojourn when He comes to Israel and issues His call to the nation to accept Him. A casual study of these verses shows that this interpretation is the only correct one.

Jehovah the speaker—who is King Messiah—as we have already seen, refers in our present section to "the Lord Jehovah," who has done certain things for Him and who will continue to render aid and assistance. Since, as we have seen, the Jehovah who is doing the talking is the Messiah, the Lord Jehovah is none other than God the Father.

In verse 4 the Messiah declares that "The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught." When we read this passage and remember that this is Jehovah who is doing the talking, we wonder how it is that the Lord Jehovah gives Him the tongue of one who is taught, and why it is necessary for the Lord Jehovah to waken Him morning by morning. If this passage were the only one which we have, we could not understand such language. But when we study other predictions concerning Jehovah the Messiah's coming to earth, we learn that He, in entering our sphere, is begotten by the Holy Spirit and is born of a virgin. Thus Jehovah the Messiah assumes human form and becomes the God-man—*Immanuel, God is with us* (Isa. 7:14; 9:6). The historical fulfillment of this prediction became a reality in the miraculous conception and virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. In his making the announcement to the virgin, Gabriel, in answer to Mary's question, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" declared, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:34,35). Notice, kind reader, the angel's statement: "Wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God." "The holy thing" begotten by the Holy Spirit came to consciousness in the union of the eternal *Logos*—the Word (John 1:1)—with this holy thing that was begotten by the Holy Spirit. Thus the holy thing begotten, after its union with the eternal *Logos*, was to be called and was thus addressed, "the Son of God." He was in truth *the God-man*. He was not God *and* man, a monstrosity. Instead, He was indeed *the God-man*. (ED. NOTE: For a thorough discussion of the subject here considered, see Sec. III, [Chap. XII, "The Atonement,"](#) in my volume, *What Men Must Believe*.) Being the God-man and being born in the form of a little baby, He grew, in stature and in wisdom, to manhood. Concerning Him Luke tells us that he "... advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (See Luke 2:52.)

There was therefore an unfolding and a development of His human nature in its connection with the divine *Logos*. Concerning this proposition there can be no doubt. An examination of the life of our Lord as recorded by the

four Evangelists shows that He had imposed upon Himself limitations—even though He was God in human form. From the standpoint of His divine nature He could look into the heavens and could comprehend God. This fact is seen in the following quotation: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal *him*" (Matt. 11:27).

Yet from the standpoint of His human nature, He had the limitations of the flesh. For instance, He declared that, concerning the day when He will return for His saints, no one "knoweth, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:35,36). On various occasions we are told that Jesus, perceived such and such a thing, acted or responded in a given manner. When all the facts regarding His human nature are gathered and are studied, one arrives at the inevitable conclusion that the Son of God, while here upon earth, imposed certain limitations upon Himself. This being true, it is natural that God the Father, who was interested in Him beyond all conception of mortal man, would give Him "the tongue of them that are taught," that He might sustain with words him that was weary. Thus the Lord Jehovah gave to Jehovah Messiah the very words which He should use in His preaching ministry to the meek and lowly of the earth. In the divine arrangement concerning the incarnation the Lord Jehovah was pleased to do this for and through the Son.

Moreover, He tells us that God the Father wakened Him morning by morning to hear as those that are taught. Messiah, according to this prediction, will rest well—perfectly, but will be awakened by the Father at the proper time in order that He might have sweet communion with Him through prayer. By this fellowship, the Messiah is prepared to speak to the people—as never man so spake. When we read this prediction in the light of the fulfillment as we see it especially recorded in Luke, we can understand this more perfectly. Luke presented the Lord Jesus as the ideal man, the perfect man. He, though God, took on the likeness of sinful flesh. He was sin apart. There was no sin in His flesh. Neither did He commit any wrong in His life. Nevertheless, it was essential for Him, in order that He might perform His redemptive work, to be in communion with His Father and daily be taught of Him before He undertook the work that lay before Him. Thus we read that often our Lord arose very early and went out to some secret place to pray. On the night before He chose the Twelve, He continued in prayer all night. After having thus been awakened by the Lord and having been supercharged by the divine power, our Lord was prepared daily to go out and battle against Satan and to preach to sinners.

It is clear that Messiah engages in a preaching ministry, for it is declared that He thus was given special talent for teaching and was awakened daily in order that He might know how to sustain with words him that was weary (50:4). He therefore did not depend upon His miraculous power to bring comfort and cheer to the weary. It was rather through words that He brought such cheer. Miracles and supernatural demonstrations only attract attention and give authentication to the one who is speaking. The Word, and the Word alone, is that which creates faith. "So belief *cometh* of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). According to verse 5, "The Lord Jehovah hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward." Not all men want truth. Unfortunately very few people, comparatively speaking, want it. They want their own way and cling tenaciously—with a life and death grip—to their own ideas. It is a very rare thing to find a Nathaniel—an Israelite in whom there is no guile (John 1:47). There is only one attitude that one can afford to take, namely, that of the noble Bereans: "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Contrary to the general attitude of men the Son of God arose every morning to receive a message from Jehovah God. His ears were open. Never did He rebel against anything that God said. Repeatedly He informed His hearers that He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who had sent Him. It never pays for anyone to seek to do his own will. Our motto should be: "God's will: nothing more, nothing less, nothing else." Such was the attitude of the Son of God.

The prophet, still speaking for the Messiah during His earthly life, declares in verses 6,7: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame."

Verse 6 especially looks at the time of the arrest, trials, mockings, and crucifixion of our Lord. When He was arraigned before the Sanhedrin, He was mocked by the guards. When He was taken to Pilate's judgment seat, the Roman soldiers likewise heaped every indignity upon Him as they scourged and ridiculed Him.

The nearer the Son of God approached Calvary, the more determined He was to continue on to the bitter end—He set His face like a flint. He goes forward to accept the sufferings that were to be His portion and to walk into the very jaws of death, being confident that God would not disappoint Him nor put Him to shame. When we look at the fulfillment of this prediction, we see that it was literally accomplished by our Lord at the time of His passion.

In this prediction the prophet moves closer to Gethsemane and Calvary, and he exclaims for the Messiah: "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand up together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me; who is he that shall condemn me? behold, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (vss. 8,9). The nearer the time approaches for the suffering and the crucifixion, the bolder He becomes. He assumes this attitude because He who justifies Him is near, namely, the Lord Jehovah. Knowing that He had omnipotence on His side, the Messiah asks the question: "Who will contend with me?" Then He challenges anyone who in the light of all the facts would become His adversary. He concludes His statement by saying that the Lord Jehovah would help Him. In the last statement of the verse He foresees all of those who do oppose Him waxing old as a garment and becoming moth-eaten; that is, they pass away. He, on the other hand, comes off victorious from the conflict.

A Call to all Truth Seekers to Accept the Messiah

After the prophet, as the representative of the Messiah, delivers his message, he makes a special personal appeal to the people in the following words:

"10 Who is among you that feareth Jehovah, that obeyeth the voice of his servant? he that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and rely upon his God. 11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that gird yourselves about with firebrands; walk ye in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow" (Isa. 50:10,11).

"Who is among you [the Jewish people] that feareth Jehovah [the Lord Jehovah, the Father] that obeyeth the voice of his servant [Messiah]?" Thus in this verse the prophet was speaking for the Lord Jehovah, sending forth a call to the honest-hearted truth seekers to accept and to obey the Messiah, the servant of Jehovah. Neither Jehovah God nor Jehovah Messiah ever forced any man's will. God made each one a free moral agent. He does all within His power to persuade men to accept the truth and to yield their lives to Him. Nevertheless He always stops short of coercion of the will. The prophet therefore, speaking for God, asks the people who will come out and obey His servant. This is a call to Israel which was issued officially on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Acts, chap. 2). That invitation has been echoing down the corridors of time to the present moment. The gospel is to the Jew first and also to the Gentile (Rom. 1:16). Now is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time. When death comes, it is too late, for it is appointed unto men once to die; after that, judgment. (See Hebrews 9:27.) The call is coming to every Hebrew to accept Messiah. An invitation is given to every sinner throughout the world.

"He that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of Jehovah, and rely upon his God" (vs. 10b). One does not have to be a brilliant and highly educated man in order to receive the truth. One does not have to be born into an environment of culture, refinement, and education in order to understand the knowledge of God. One may be born in heathen darkness and may be walking in the same; but, if he is only honest and conscientious, prizing truth

above everything else, the Lord will bring truth to such a one. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:5): Cornelius was living up to all the light that he had. Moreover, it is evident that he was praying for more light; for the angel, dispatched from heaven to him, declared that his prayers had been heard and that he should send to Joppa for one Simon, whose name was Peter, and who was lodging by the seaside. This messenger of God was to tell him words whereby he and his household might be saved. Thus we see that an honest, conscientious truth seeker received the light. God gave it to him. What He did for Cornelius, He will do for anyone else who is thus seeking truth and righteousness.

But to those who do not want truth but who wish to continue in their own spiritual darkness, the prophet said, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that gird yourselves about with firebrands; walk ye in the flame of your fire, and among the brands that ye have kindled" (vs. 11). It is quite evident in this connection that these people whom he thus addresses are those who are satisfied with their own spiritual condition and standing before God. He therefore is willing for them to walk in the light of their own firebrands—in the light of human knowledge and effort. So long as they do that, however, they can never come to the true light. Those who thus persist in their own darkness "shall lie down in sorrow." In other words, these shall pass out of this life without God and without hope in the world. They shall go off into everlasting darkness and shame.

A TRIPLE CALL AND A THREEFOLD EXHORTATION TO AWAKE

Chapters 51:1-52:12

In our study this month we are to examine Isaiah 51:1-52:12. Unfortunately the chapter division at 52:1 breaks the thought of this section. An examination of 51:1-52:12 proves that this is a single literary unit. Moreover, as we shall see next month, the chapter division should not begin with 52:1, as it does, but should start at 52:13.

The Triple Call (Isa. 51:1-8)

The triple call is found in chapter 51, verses 1-8. The first of these three calls is found in verse 1; the second in verse 4; and the third in verse 7. At first the prophet addressed certain ones and urged them to "Hearken to me," then he called upon them to "Attend unto me," finally, he urged them again to "Hearken unto me." In verse 1 he addressed his auditors as "... ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Jehovah," in the second instance he spoke to them as "... O my people ... O my nation," finally, in the third call, he addressed them as "... ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law." There is progress in each of these addresses.

At first the Lord spoke of their following after righteousness and seeking Jehovah. These people are groping their way toward God. In other words, they are seeking for light. In the second place, the Lord recognizes them as His people, as His nation. At that time they will not in reality be converted and in actuality be His people. But He speaks this in anticipation of what they will be, since they are truth seekers. Finally, He recognizes them as those who know righteousness and those in whose hearts His law is, or has been written. In the third stage they are recognized as actually having been born again and having the new nature implanted in their hearts. When we read these facts in the light of other passages, we know that the prophet was looking at those who will constitute the faithful remnant of the end time. The Lord knows who wants truth and who does not. He guarantees that the truth will be gotten to every honest, conscientious soul. Everyone who hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be filled.

In the first call the prophet exhorted these truth seekers to "... look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged." The imagery here is a rock quarry from which stones have been blasted. The Jewish nation is thought of as these stones that have been quarried from this rock. That this interpretation is correct, is seen by a glance at the second verse: "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him, and made him many." In this verse the prophet was referring to the fact that Abraham and Sarah had passed the age of parenthood when Isaac was born. In order that they might become parents, God performed a biological miracle upon their bodies. Thus the birth of Isaac was the result of the creative activity of the Almighty (Isa. 43:1). Although Abraham was but one, by that biological miracle his descendants had become many. When the Lord called him from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Palestine, He promised that He would make his descendants as numerous as the stars of the heavens and as the sands beside the sea. The Lord has never fulfilled this promise in the proportions here contemplated, but He will do it in His own good time. That Isaiah had this future vision of Israel and of her becoming many in view in this prophecy is clear from verse 3, which foretells the time when Palestine shall become as the Garden of Eden, that Jehovah planted. At that time joy and gladness will be the order of the day. Many scriptures foretell the conditions which will prevail in Israel during the Millennium.

In the prophet's second call to Israel to give heed to him, the Lord calls attention to the fact that a law shall go forth from Him and that He will establish His justice for a light of the nations of earth (vs. 4). The giving of this law is of course future from Isaiah's day and from our own time. God gave the law at Sinai, but when our Lord, the Hebrew Messiah, returns, the law of the Lord shall go forth from Jerusalem and the word of God from Zion: "... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3). Other prophets speak of the time when this law will go forth from Zion.

According to verse 5 the prophet was looking forward to the time when God's righteousness of which he spoke is, of course, imputed; it will be near in that He who is Israel's righteousness will be close at hand, that is, His coming will be near. In view of these facts, I know that the prophet looked forward and saw the time shortly before Messiah makes His personal appearance to save Israel. At that time the Lord will judge His people. They will expectantly await His coming and will put their trust in Him. Thus we see in verse 5 a prediction of the conversion of the world, which will be brought about by saved Israel.

When a person reads verse 6, he sees that there shall come a time when the present heavens and earth shall pass away. The Lord Jesus Christ foretold the same event (Matt. 24:35). John, in Revelation 20:11, informed us that the passing away of the material heavens and earth occurs at the end of the Millennial Age, at the great white throne. Though the material universe passes away, God's salvation which He gives to His people will continue forever and ever. In other words, those who are saved from this earth will be saved eternally and will live in the eternal Jerusalem which comes down out of the eternal heavens and rests upon the eternal earth—as we read in Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. (For a more detailed study of the subject of "The Eternal Order," see my volume, *What Men Must Believe*, chapter XV.)

As suggested above, the third call goes forth to those who know righteousness and to those in whose hearts God's law is written, not with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the Living God. To these of the faithful remnant the salvation of God will be clear. They will understand the matter of imputed righteousness. They will also understand the great doctrine of the regeneration of the heart. To them the Lord gives the exhortation that they should not fear the reproach of men, nor be dismayed at any of their reviling's. In verse 8 the prophet compared these wicked ones to a garment that the worm and the moth may eat; but, being clothed with the garments of righteousness as implied from the context, those heeding the call shall enjoy God's salvation forever and ever, their garments being made of God's righteousness.

The Threefold Exhortation (Isa. 51:9-52:12)

In verse 9 we read the first exhortation which is directed by the prophet to him who is addressed by the phrase, "O arm of Jehovah." But in verse 17 the second exhortation is directed to Zion in the following words: "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, that has drunk at the hand of Jehovah the cup of his wrath; thou has drunken the bowl of the cup of staggering, and drained it." The third of these appeals is also sent to Zion and appears thus: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (52:1).

As we have already seen in the study of the first eight verses of chapter 51, the prophet looked out into the future, to the end time, and saw a portion of the nation seeking God and actually finding Him, coming into an actual experience of grace. With this vision before him, the prophet addressed the "arm of Jehovah," urging Him to arise to the occasion and to meet the new situation—that of Israel and of her being ready to accept Him. But the prophet assumed that which is stated in other connections, and which prepares the nation to accept the Messiah. That which gets Israel ready to receive Him, as reflected in this passage, is nothing other than the persecutions which will come upon the nation of the Jews at this future time. Along with the persecutions which Israel will yet suffer, will be her having to drink of the cup of the wrath of the Almighty, which will consist of various judgments that will come upon the earth during the Tribulation: "... for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9).

Above it was assumed that "the arm of Jehovah" is none other than Messiah. That this hypothesis is correct is abundantly proved by the proper understanding of Isaiah 53:1; which reads: "Who hath believed our message: and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?" An examination of Isaiah, chapter 53, shows that the prophet was speaking of King Messiah. In this prediction he compared Him to an arm of a person and also to a tender plant growing up

out of dry ground. Isaiah is fond of speaking of the Messiah under the symbolism of "the arm of Jehovah." In 51:9 where the prophet speaks of "the arm of Jehovah," he has the same idea in mind. This is confirmed by an examination of the context.

In addressing this "arm of Jehovah," the prophet spoke of His awaking "as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times. Is it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the monster?" In these words the prophet went back into the dim, distant past and spoke of this "arm of Jehovah" and of what He did then, namely, of His piercing Rahab the monster. This being was doubtless the same one of whom Jehovah spoke in Job, chapters 40 and 41. An examination of these two passages shows that God was speaking of Satan and certain of his lieutenants under the symbolism of wild, ferocious monsters, behemoth and leviathan (Job 40:15; 41:1-34). A reference is made to these same wicked, mighty spiritual forces in Psalm 74:12-17. A close study of each of these passages shows that the writers were speaking of Satan and his chief lieutenants under the symbolism of wild animals. From the passage in Psalm 74 we know that the sacred penman was speaking of Satan and the calamity which overtook the earth and concerning which we read in Genesis 1:2: "And the earth became a desolation and a waste ..." (lit. trans.) In Isaiah 51:9,10a, when studied in the light of all related passages, Satan and his cohorts are clearly in view.

When Satan rebelled against God and caused that great catastrophic judgment to come upon the earth, this "arm of Jehovah" awoke and arose to the conflict in which He pierced the great monster, Rahab, Satan himself. This decisive struggle occurred at the time when the earth was enveloped in water; but, on the third day of the reconstruction of which we read in Genesis, chapter 1, this mighty "arm of Jehovah" dried up the waters and caused the dry land to appear.

Not only did this "arm of Jehovah" awake and arise to meet the situation at the time of this primitive disaster, but He awoke, arose, and made a path through the depths of the sea for the children of Israel when they came out of the land of Egypt. The "arm of Jehovah" in the Exodus narrative is called "the angel of Jehovah," Jehovah himself—Messiah in His prenatal state. The redeemed of this passage (Isa. 51:10) is none other than the children of Israel whom the Lord delivered and preserved when the death angel passed over the land of Egypt. Those who were screened behind the blood of the paschal lamb were spared the death stroke.

The prophet, seeing what the "arm of Jehovah" has done in carrying out the plan of God which runs through the ages, looked out, in verse 11, and saw the time when the ransomed of Jehovah shall return and come with singing unto Zion: "And the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." The ransomed in this instance are none other than the faithful remnant of Israel who heed the triple call of which we have been studying. The "arm of Jehovah" paid the ransom price on Calvary nineteen hundred years ago. The remnant accept Him as their Lord, Saviour, and Messiah—as the one who paid the ransom for their redemption. The prophet therefore sees the Messiah working in behalf of this faithful remnant. Because of what He has done and will do for them yet in the future, they will come from the four corners of the earth and will return to Zion with singing and with everlasting joy upon their heads. After that time they will never sorrow anymore.

The prophet saw the "arm of Jehovah," having awakened, ready and prepared to go into action for the deliverance of Israel at this future time. In verses 12-16 Isaiah impersonated King Messiah, who delivers the following message:

"12 I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou art afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass; 13 and hast forgotten Jehovah thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and fearest continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he maketh ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? 14 The captive exile shall speedily be loosed; and he shall not die and go down into the pit, neither shall his bread fail. 15 For I am

Jehovah thy God, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar: Jehovah of hosts is his name. 16 And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people" (Isa. 51:12-16).

This "arm of Jehovah" tells Israel, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou art afraid of man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass ..." Messiah alone can comfort downtrodden Israel at this future time, and He will do so. In view of the fact that He will champion the cause of this faithful remnant and will comfort it, the "arm of Jehovah" asks these faithful believers why they are afraid of men who die like the grass of the field and why have they forgotten Jehovah their Maker, the one who "stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth." The Jews, having been persecuted by the Gentiles and having been slaughtered worse than cattle by them, have been afraid of men. This situation has existed more or less throughout the entire Christian Dispensation—to the shame and discredit of those who claimed to be the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time Israel, in her wanderings, has forgotten Jehovah her Maker, the one who has stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. From John 1:1-4 we know that the Jehovah who created the heavens is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. As the context indicates, it is He who is doing the talking in our passage from Isaiah, chapter 51.

When we read verses 13 and 14 of this passage in the light of related ones, we know that Israel will be under the heel of oppression and tyranny and will be in fear, from daylight until dark, of her opponents. Notwithstanding this terrible bondage of fear and persecution, the Messiah assures the faithful remnant that "The captive exile shall speedily be loosed; and he shall not die *and go down* into the pit, neither shall his bread fail." Israel, scattered among the nations as at the present time, is thought of as a group of exiles who shall speedily, when the time here foreseen arrives, be let loose and be led back to the land of the fathers.

The speaker here reminds the remnant that He is Jehovah who stirs up the sea and causes the waves thereof to roar. He it is who has put His words of promise—which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures—into the mouth of Israel and has covered her in the hollow of His hand, during the centuries, lest she might become exterminated by her inveterate enemies. As He has protected her through the ages, He will continue to do so during the Tribulation Period in order that He might "... plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people" (vs. 16). The devastating judgments of the Tribulation Period will wreck the earth to the extent that the Lord will have to create certain new material both upon the earth and in the heavens above in order that there might be a Kingdom Age. This creation of new material and preparation of the earth as a fit place for man to live in during the Millennium is referred to in Isaiah 65:17 as the Lord's creating "new heavens and a new earth." God will protect the faithful remnant through the trying experiences of that future time when His judgments are in the earth and when He is creating the heavens above anew and the earth anew and also creating Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth. All of this will be done with this objective in view: That Israel may be His people, the channel through which His blessings might flow out to all nations.

The second call to "Awake, awake, stand up" is directed to Jerusalem. The entire message is found in verses 17-23. In this passage Jerusalem—and with her all the Jewish people—is represented as lying in the dust, drunken, having partaken of the cup of God's wrath. Just as an intoxicating liquor dethrones the reason and renders one incapable of standing but causes one to fall and lie in the dust, so the judgments of God are thought of by the prophet as a liquid which causes the entire nation to stagger and fall.

Leaving this figure in verse 18, the prophet asserted that there is none of the sons of Zion who is able to guide her; neither is there any among her sons who takes her by the hand as she lay prostrate upon the ground. Two things at that time shall have befallen her: desolation and destruction, famine and sword. These judgments are to be understood as literal. This is confirmed by the proper interpretation of the judgments of the great Tribulation which are set forth in the Book of Revelation.

In verse 20 the prophet gave us a picture of the city of Jerusalem as it shall be when the storm of God's wrath shall have struck the city and destroyed many of her sons: "Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as an antelope in a net; they are full of the wrath of Jehovah, the rebuke of thy God."

In verses 21-23 the prophet resumed the figure of comparing Jerusalem to a drunken woman lying helplessly in the dust. He declared to her that the Lord Jehovah her God will have at that time taken the cup of staggering and the bowl of His wrath out of her hand. She will at that time have drunk all the wrath of God which is commensurate with her sins. She will therefore never have to drink of it again. When the Lord thus takes this cup of drunkenness from His Chosen People, He will place it in the hands of her enemies who will have to drink it to the very depths of despair. The Lord thus takes care of the remnant from that time on. There will then be a reversal of the conditions of Israel with that of her enemies.

The third and last exhortation to "Awake, awake," is also directed to Zion (52:1). In this verse and the following the prophet still thought of Israel as a drunken, helpless woman lying in the dust. Since she will nevermore drink of the cup of His wrath, and since she will at that time be recovering from the terrific strokes of His judgment, the prophet told her to arise and put on strength. Moreover, she is to put on her beautiful garments and to sit upon her throne.

These verses picture Jerusalem with the Jewish people as being delivered from her perpetual tormentors and of her having sufficient strength to arise, to shake the dust off herself, and to clothe herself with her beautiful, royal garments, and to mount the throne for the purpose of reigning upon the earth. God brings deliverance to those who turn to Him. He never coerces the will. He never forces anyone. He calls upon one to exercise one's faith by turning to Him. When one thus in faith turns to the Lord, the Almighty enables such a one to do so. The saying, "The Lord's commandings are His enablings," is certainly true—both of the individual and of the group that turns to Him.

Zion is to awake and to attire herself in order that she might reign in glory because she has been sold for nought and shall be redeemed without money (52:3). As we saw in the study of Isaiah 50:1, Jerusalem with her children was sold for their sins. Her husband, the Messiah, received no remuneration from the sale of her. Her being sold, He therefore told her that she is to be redeemed without money. Salvation is full and free. On explaining his meaning, the prophet referred to the fact that Israel went down into Egypt to sojourn there and was oppressed. Moreover, she went into Assyria and was ill-treated by that mighty, cruel power. Messiah, speaking to the people of this future time, declares that He is there, ready to assist in Zion's deliverance, since she was taken away for nought and since "they that rule over them do howl, saith Jehovah, and my name continually all the day is blasphemed" (vs. 5). Those ruling over the Hebrews were their own political and religious rulers, as well as the foreigners who conquered Israel when she was in her homeland. Thus because of the wickedness and of the sins of both the leaders of Israel and of the people following them, untold sorrow and distress have come upon the nation.

Since they have been—to a certain extent—the victims of circumstances, the Lord declares that they shall know His name and that they shall know in that day that He is the one who says to them, "Behold, it is I." Israel's Redeemer takes everything into consideration and will in graciousness and loving-kindness deliver her and bring her to the point where she will acknowledge that He is the one who accomplishes her salvation.

In thinking and speaking of Israel's final deliverance, Isaiah in a most dramatic manner, upon seeing certain ones who bring glad tidings of good news, proclaimed to the Jewish people: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that published peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth" (52:7). Thus in vision the prophet saw the messengers of the gospel coming to Israel to tell her of the redeeming love of her Messiah. He was entranced with the vision of these heralds of the cross as they go to the Jewish people scattered throughout the world and thus he exclaimed, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings ..." The prophet looked forward to the time when those who have the truth of salvation go

to the Jewish people and tell them of God's redeeming love and of His salvation which their Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ—purchased on Calvary nineteen hundred years ago.

It is clear from the passage that those who bring the message of salvation to Israel understand the truth and know how to present it to the Jewish people. It is absolutely essential that the one who wishes to bring the truth to Israel must have a thorough knowledge of her place in the plan of God, as set forth in the prophetic word and of the gospel message itself. Moreover, he must understand the proper approach to the Jew and be tactful in presenting the truth. That one must possess the highest qualifications and preparation if one wishes to be able to present the message to all classes of Israel is evident from the fact that the Jewish people, admittedly, are a great intellectual group. They are thinkers and are great readers. It behooves us, therefore, who are interested in Israel that we spare no time nor expense in our preparation for the task to which God calls us. (For those who are especially interested in giving the truth to Israel, I would suggest that they study most carefully my small volume entitled, *Preparing for the World Wide Revival*.)

A second exclamation of the prophet is contained in verse 8: "The voice of thy watchmen! They lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when Jehovah returneth to Zion." In verse 7, as we have already seen, the prophet in vision saw messengers, heralds of good tidings, coming to Zion to proclaim the truth to her, but in verse 8 he saw watchmen, sentinels, upon the walls of Zion, whose vigilant eyes scan the country as they perform their duties as sentries. Suddenly they see these heralds of the gospel coming to them. They recognize in their countenance that they are not enemies but that they are friends; and that they have a message of good news for them. These watchmen therefore lift up the voice, "... together do they sing." When these heralds approach, they of course give them their message. They believe it; they understand it; they therefore lift up their voices in song together. The reason for their doing this is stated in the following clause: "... for they shall see eye to eye, when Jehovah *returneth* to Zion." From this statement it is clear that these heralds of the gospel tell these watchmen in Israel—the leaders of the nation—about the return of Jehovah to Zion and of His coming in a visible manner to her in order to deliver her. In other words, the entire message which these heralds of the cross bring to Zion center around the second coming of the Messiah. That the prophet was speaking of the second coming is evident, for he declared that the people of Zion will see eye to eye when Jehovah returneth to Zion. The fact that He will return to Zion implies that He has been there before, has gone away, and is coming back. In view of these facts, when they are studied in the light of related passages, we see that the prophet in vision saw a host of Jewish evangelists giving the truth of the gospel to the nation of Israel.

Isaiah, being thrilled with the vision of Jerusalem's deliverance, which will occur when Messiah returns to Zion, spoke to the waste places of Jerusalem and called upon them to break forth into joy and singing. He realized that that will be the time when the Lord comforts His people and redeems Jerusalem. At that time the Lord will make bare "his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth" shall see the salvation of God.

This message concludes with an exhortation for the people of Zion to depart and to go forth from the places where they are and to touch no unclean thing. This passage assumes that the people of Israel will be away from home, away from their native soil. As we have already seen, the Babylonian captivity and exile furnished the background of chapters 40-48. The vessels of Jehovah's house had been carried to Babylon. Many of the priests had been taken into exile. When the captives returned under Zerubbabel, those who bore the vessels of Jehovah were to purify themselves for the purpose and to come back to the homeland. In our present passage 50:1-52:12 the prophet, as we see from the context, had in mind the regathering of Israel from all quarters of the globe. But he spoke of this future regathering in terms of the restoration from Babylon under Zerubbabel. The Hebrews are therefore urged to go forth from the places where they are, to cleanse themselves, especially those bearing the vessels of Jehovah—the priestly tribe—and to return to their own land. The Lord promises protection to them and speaks of it in terms of the Exodus when the glory of the Lord hovered over them and went between them and their enemies. Great will be the deliverance of Israel at this future time.

ANOTHER PICTURE OF THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH AS SET FORTH IN ISAIAH

52:13—53:12

In Isaiah 52:13-53:12 we reach the climax so far as the "servant passages" of Isaiah are concerned. The first mention of the servant is found in Isaiah 41:8. An examination of that context shows that the one to whom reference is made is none other than the remnant of Israel that will be gathered from among all the nations in the end time and restored to the land of the fathers and to fellowship with God. But also in Isaiah 42:18-22 we read of the servant of Jehovah. From the facts of this context it is quite evident that not the remnant of the nation is referred to, but the entire Hebrew race. In other portions of Isaiah the servant indicates an individual, the ideal Israelite, the Messiah of the nation. The reason for reaching such a conclusion is that the facts of the various contexts indicate this meaning.

Who is the servant of Isaiah 52:13-53:12? An examination of the facts of this context shows very clearly that an individual is meant, namely, the Messiah of Israel. In this passage this servant is differentiated from the remnant and from the entire nation. Moreover, He suffers in behalf of His people and in behalf of the entire world. These facts justify our interpreting this as a prediction of the personal Messiah.

Such was the interpretation of this marvelous passage by the ancient Synagogue. The Hebrew people continued to explain it as a messianic prediction until the days of Rashi, who gave a peculiar turn to this passage and forced upon it a meaning which the facts will never permit. He thus reasoned: The one of this passage suffers in behalf of others. Israel, as no other nation throughout the centuries, has suffered; therefore this servant can be none other than Israel. This position, in his opinion, was strengthened by the thought that in certain other passages the word "servant" does refer to the nation of Israel. But in the light of what I have just said, it is quite evident that Rashi and those who have followed in his path since his day have not taken all of the facts into consideration and have jumped at a hasty conclusion. No one, who has no theory to support, would ever come to the conclusion that the servant, of our passage can possibly be either the nation or the remnant of Israel.

The Redemptive Career of King Messiah

"13 Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. 14 Like as many were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men), 15 so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand" (Isa. 52:13-15).

In verse 13 the prophet looked out toward the future and called the nation's attention to this servant of Jehovah who "shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." The word in the original translated *shall deal wisely* also means *prosper*. The former rendition is the preferable one in the light of the facts of the context. This one's entire life and all of His acts shall be characterized by prudent, wise decisions.

We are next told that He shall be exalted, lifted up, and shall be very high. An examination of these words in the original shows that the term translated "shall be exalted" literally means *to rise or raise oneself*. An examination of the various occurrences of this word throughout the Hebrew Bible shows that such is the primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning of this term. One should therefore adhere to the literal meaning on all occasions, unless there are facts in the context which show that the literal sense is not intended. The word rendered "lifted up" literally means *to lift oneself up or be lifted up*. The verb rendered "shall be very high" literally means what these words imply. Taking the literal meaning of these words, we see that the verse is a prediction that Messiah will deal wisely, that He will rise from the place where He is (which is not stated in this verse), that He will lift himself up, or be lifted up, and that as a result of His being lifted up He shall be exceedingly or very high. When one studies the first nine verses of Isaiah, chapter 53, one comes to the conclusion that Messiah is slain and dies and is buried— "And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man

in his death"—and that after His death He prolongs His days (vs. 10). It is clear from these facts that Messiah is slain, that He is buried, and that He rises from the grave. In view of these facts, then, the verb rendered in 52:13 "shall be exalted" which literally means *rise* should thus be understood in its literal meaning of rising from the dead. This passage is then a prediction that, notwithstanding Messiah's dealing wisely, He is slain and buried; but the powers of the unseen world cannot keep Him, for He rises from the dead. After He has returned to life and has come forth from the tomb, leaving it empty, He lifts Himself up or is lifted up; that is, He lifts Himself up from His position upon the earth. When this part of the prediction is viewed in the light of related passages, it is seen that the lifting up here refers to the ascension of the Messiah to the right hand of the throne of God after His resurrection. Being at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He is very high as the last verb of the prediction indicates. Such is the meaning of this verse when it is translated literally and when it is viewed in the light of the facts following in chapter 53. We may conclude therefore that Isaiah saw, in vision, the Messiah as He moved among men, teaching and performing His deeds of mercy. Notwithstanding that fact, He is slain, is buried, but rises from the dead, bringing life and immortality to light in the gospel. After His return to life, He then ascends to the throne of God by accepting the invitation of the Lord, set forth in Psalm 110:1: "Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Having ascended to the Father in the heavens, the Messiah remains in that position of honor and glory during the present dispensation—until God the Father makes His enemies the footstool of His feet. Thus in our verse we see the personal ministry of our Lord, His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of the throne of God.

Having given us a bird's-eye view of the redemptive career of Messiah, the prophet, in verses 14 and 15 enlarges upon the picture that is briefly sketched in verse 13. In verse 14 he speaks of the appearance of Messiah when He is executed; but in verse 15 he sees this rejected, executed Messiah reigning in glory and power over the earth, which prophecy will be fulfilled by the return of our Lord at the end of the Tribulation.

According to verse 14 many are standing around witnessing the execution of King Messiah. The pain to which He is subjected is so very intense that His extreme sufferings are registered in His countenance— "(his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men)." Thus as the spectators gazed upon Him in His suffering, they are unable to comprehend what they see transpiring before their eyes—they are amazed, they have a brainstorm; for such is the meaning of the word rendered "were astonished." What they see defies all the laws of logic and reason, for they cannot comprehend how any suffering could thus stamp itself upon the countenance of any mortal.

In contrast to the astonishment which the spectators experience in looking at Messiah when He is executed, nations, according to verse 15, will likewise experience a mighty shock when they see this same one, who has been executed, seated upon a throne of glory and all nations bowing down in humble submission before Him. The prophet therefore said, "... so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which has not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand." The word rendered "sprinkle" in the clause "so shall he sprinkle many nations," also means *to startle*, which fact is indicated in a footnote of the Revised Version. The primary meaning of this word is "sprinkle." This position no one who knows Hebrew can deny. The term also means, "startle," as our translators have rendered it in the footnote. If the primary meaning of a word does not fit the context, then we are to select that secondary or metaphorical meaning which does satisfy these demands. Since the prophet is drawing a parallel between the amazement of the spectators at the execution of Messiah and the great astonishment of kings when Messiah sits upon His throne of glory, we are forced to accept the meaning "startle" as the correct term expressing the idea of the Hebrew in this connection. We should therefore render the clause, "so shall he startle many nations."

There is a comparatively small group that witnesses the execution of King Messiah. They are shocked by what they see and what they cannot understand. In contrast with that, when Messiah comes the second time every eye shall see

Him and even those who pierced Him shall look upon Him. The nations of the world will be struck with astonishment when they behold Him in His glory: "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separated the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25:31,32). The kings of the earth who will not have been told of Messiah in His glory will be shocked by the splendor of that which they visibly and literally see at His second coming.

In Isaiah 52:13-15 therefore we see the entire redemptive career of King Messiah set forth which, as noted above, consists of His first coming, His rejection, His execution, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension to the right hand of the throne of God, His session on the throne with His Father during the present age, and His final return to establish His kingdom upon the earth and to reign here for a thousand years. This passage does not tell that our Lord will reign a thousand years when He returns. This information is found in Revelation 20:1-5, which passage is parallel with this one.

Israel's National Confession

53 Who hath believed our message and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not, 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who *among them* 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*? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isa. 53:1-9).

Moses outlined the history of Israel from the time of the Exodus through the centuries to the Millennial Age (Lev., chap. 26). Her present worldwide dispersion is set forth in verses 34-39. In verse 39 Moses spoke of the last generation of Israel scattered among the nations, that will pine away in their iniquity and in the iniquities of their fathers. Then, in verse 40, the great lawgiver foretold the national confession of Israel which she shall make in the year 1945-plus. (In a definite year in the future Israel will make this confession. Since I do not know what year that will be, I call it 1945-plus.)

The prediction concerning this confession is found in the following words: "And they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed against me, and also that, because they walked contrary unto me, I also walked contrary unto them, and brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land" (Lev. 26:40-42). Notice the facts that are stated in this quotation. The fathers of Israel commit a trespass against Jehovah when they are in the land. On account of this sin or iniquitous act, the Lord spews them out of the land of their fathers and scatters them among the nations. The last generation of the Hebrew nation scattered among the nations confesses its iniquity and the iniquity of its fathers. When this future generation makes that confession, the

Lord remembers His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and then gathers them back into their own land. According to this prediction there was some definite, specific act committed by the fathers of Israel while they were still in the land. When they committed this wrong, God spewed them out and scattered them among the nations. When their descendants confess this one iniquitous act, which the fathers committed and of which they likewise are guilty, the Lord then gathers them back into their own land. One should note that Moses used the singular number, *iniquity*. The last generation of Israel confesses their share in that iniquity and also admits that the fathers committed that iniquitous act in trespassing against God. In this passage Moses does not tell us what that iniquitous act was or would be, but he shows us that the history of Israel and the well-being of the Chosen People are contingent upon the nation's confessing the guilty act and pleading for a restoration to divine favor. Could you, my friend, discover some one single act of wrong-doing that was committed by the Jewish fathers in Palestine and that was the occasion of God's spewing them out of the land? Remember, when they confess this, then Israel's fortunes will change instantly.

The prophet Hosea likewise referred to the same matter. In chapter 5:8-13 of his prophecy, Hosea spoke of transgressions of both Ephraim and Judah against the Lord, and of His punishing them and wounding them and of their being sick (spiritually, of course). They therefore turned to Assyria for help, but the prophet declares that healing cannot be obtained from that source.

Following the law of double reference—the blending the description of an event close at hand with the prophecy concerning one in the remote future—Hosea blended the prediction concerning the spiritual sickness and the wound which the Lord would inflict upon the Chosen People with one yet to occur in the more distant future: "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly" (Hosea 5:14,15). These verses presuppose that Jehovah is present upon earth, Israel commits some sin against Him; therefore He like a lion, or young lion, tears the nation, goes away, returns to His place, and declares that He will never return till they acknowledge their offence and seek His face. In their affliction they will seek Him earnestly. When Messiah returns to heaven after having been mistreated by the nation, He remains there until Israel acknowledges her sin and seeks His face. According to the prediction she will seek Him in her affliction.

In the prediction which we have just been studying, we see the forecast that Israel will make this confession; but in Isaiah 53:1-9 we have the very confession which the people of Israel will make. Isaiah was carried forward by the Spirit and was set down in the midst of the last generation of Israel scattered among the nations. From this standpoint he makes the confession for the whole nation; in other words, he confesses for it. In doing so he shows the false conception that the nation has entertained concerning Messiah. This is shown in the first three verses, but in verses 4-9 the prophet speaking for Israel states the truth concerning Him.

That this is the confession which the nation in the year 1945-plus will make is clear from the fact that Isaiah in these verses acknowledges for Israel that He, the Messiah, received the stroke which was due to fall upon the Jewish race, and that by His stripes healing has been brought to her. The Jewish people as a race have never learned these facts, but they will, eventually, be taught them. Israel will be convinced of the error of her way and will acknowledge her mistaken views and will state the truth as she learns it. When the people of Israel thus make this confession and plead for Messiah to return, He will do so.

"Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised: and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53:1-3).

In verse 1 of this passage we see that the people of Israel will, in amazement and in chagrin, ask: "Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?" It is most difficult to translate the Hebrew word rendered by "our message." This is in the passive voice and means *that which we have heard*. By this rhetorical question they will mean to affirm that practically very few of the nation believed the message concerning the Messiah and His salvation, which has been told to it from the time of His first appearance onward.

The reason that Israel does not believe the message that is brought to her is that Messiah, upon His making His first appearance on earth, does not meet her expectations. From other passages of scripture, we know that the Jews were looking for a military leader who would institute a revolt against their oppressors and would lead them to victory and national independence. Thus the Messiah does not appeal to them as a military leader. He does not manifest any of those characteristics that are essential for a warrior. The prophet therefore, according to verse 2, foretold that Messiah would grow up before God as a tender plant out of a dry ground. There would be no military bearing about him that would cause the nation to accept Him as the leader of a revolution against their oppressors. Moreover, according to verse 3, He is despised and rejected of men. He is holy, spotless, undefiled. His preaching is of the highest type and of the loftiest character. Sinful men are not attracted to Him; Men love darkness rather, than light because their deeds are evil. He exposes their sinfulness and therefore He is despised. Being in the world which He made, He was not recognized by men. He therefore becomes acquainted with grief, with sorrow and distress. The leaders of the people hide their faces from Him and consider Him as of no value.

For one to get the true pictures of the Messiah as He is presented in verses 1-3, a person must, in his thinking, take his place with the penitent remnant of Israel in the year 1945-plus. One must assume that Israel knows the facts concerning the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came in the first century and was rejected by the Jewish people because they were looking for a political Messiah, whereas He did not come to play that role at His first appearance. If anyone will thus think of these verses as an Israelite will in the year 1945-plus and will look back to the first century at Jesus of Nazareth, he will put all of the verbs of the passage in the past tense. They should thus be rendered. The Hebrew verbs do not have the time element. This is to be gathered from the drift of the thought and the facts of the context. In these verses the penitent remnant of Israel will tell the world what the Jewish nation has thought of the lord Jesus Christ ever since His first appearance. They will acknowledge that they had this low estimate of Him, and that the whole nation, with the exception of the minority who believe on Christ, have rejected Him. By the year 1945-plus the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ will have been given to the nation of Israel. Her eyes will be open. She will see facts and truths as they are. She will therefore make the following confession, which will be true to facts:

"4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among *them* 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*? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isa. 53:4-9).

The remnant will confess that notwithstanding their incorrect idea concerning the Messiah, He was indeed and in truth their long-expected Deliverer and Redeemer. Moreover, they will have been taught the truth and will accept it as correct that He bore the griefs or the sicknesses of the nation; that He carried their sorrows, when He made His appearance upon earth nineteen hundred years ago. Nevertheless they confess that they esteemed Him as one stricken, smitten of

God, and afflicted. Moreover, they also will have learned about the actual crucifixion and will state that, when He was pierced on the cross, He was thus wounded for the transgressions of the nation, and that He was bruised for their iniquities. In other words, the chastisement that was to fall upon them for their sins fell upon Him. The idea of substitution is woven into the very warp and woof of this revelation. That the peace and the welfare of the nation was involved in His crucifixion, they will admit.

Then the nation of Israel will confess that "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." In what sense do all go astray? Let us remember that this is the confession of the remnant of Israel in the year 1945-plus. These people will confess that the nation as a whole, from the time of Messiah's first coming until the time that they receive the truth have gone astray, in that they have misunderstood the Messiah and did not recognize Him when He came the first time. Furthermore, they will admit that the nation turned from Him to its own way. Notwithstanding that fact the Lord Jehovah laid upon Him the iniquity of the whole race. In other words, He tasted death for every man and made possible the way of salvation for all who will come to God by Him. In the light of the facts of the context, we must hold to this interpretation of this most important verse. It is therefore incorrect for us to take this passage out of its connection and apply it to men in general. It is true that men refused to retain God in their knowledge and drifted away from Him. Hence they went astray. This teaching is found in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. But what Isaiah in 53:6 says has specific reference to Israel's not recognizing her Messiah and of her being led astray in regard to Him and of her having rejected Him through the centuries.

In verses 7 and 8 we see a clear picture of a mock trial and the injustice through which Messiah was caused to pass when He was on trial before His enemies. Israel will acknowledge that Messiah recognized the injustice, that He was aware of the whole situation; but that He, like a lamb before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth in protest against such unrighteousness. Moreover, in this confession, the people of Israel will acknowledge that it was by oppression and judgment He was taken away, and that there was no one of His Generation who understood the situation clearly enough and who had the moral and spiritual courage to stand up for Him against the great iniquity that was condemning Him.

Israel will also confess that in Messiah's being cut off out of the land of the living, He was being executed in behalf of the people of Israel. From other passages we see that it is for the sins of the whole world. But since this passage is Israel's penitential confession, she naturally will pour out her heart to God and tell him that none of the nation recognized that Messiah was suffering the stroke of judgment instead of allowing it to fall upon the people.

In verse 9 we see the death and burial of King Messiah. His enemies select His grave among the wicked, intending to heap ignominy and shame upon His name and a perpetual reproach. However, as He dies there is a rich man who champions His cause. He is therefore with the rich man in His death or, literally, *dyings*. When we read this in the light of the historical fulfillment, we see that the rich man of whom the prophet spoke was none other than Joseph of Arimathea, who, when Christ was dead, went to Pilate and asked for His body. The request being granted, he took the body of Jesus down and with hasty preparation laid it in his own new tomb in which never man had been laid. Thus ends the penitential confession of the remnant of Israel. But a second version of this same confession is to be found in Isaiah 63:15-64:12.

The Divine Interpretation of Messiah's Atonement

"10 Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong, his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the

strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors " (Isa. 53:10-12).

After the prophet told us what the nation of Israel will confess in the future when its eyes are opened to the facts concerning the messiahship of the Lord Jesus and His being the Redeemer of the world, he in verses 10-12 of this chapter gave us the divine interpretation of Messiah's execution. Although there was no violence nor deceit in His mouth, Jehovah was pleased to bruise Him. He, the Lord Jehovah, had Him put to grief. In the plan and purpose of God, Messiah was to suffer and to taste death for every man. He was to become a curse for us and bear the brunt of the wrath of God against sin in our behalf. Those who engage in the rejection and execution of King Messiah of course acted upon their own initiative. Nevertheless, in what they did, they were carrying out the plans of God. The Apostle Peter explained on the day of Pentecost that those Jews to whom he was speaking on that occasion, by the hands of lawless men (Romans) put the Lord Jesus to death, and in their doing this they were simply carrying out "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." (See Acts 2:23). Although by His overruling providence they were carrying out the divine plans and purposes, yet those who put Him to death were responsible in that they sinned against light and committed one of the most horrible crimes, or the most heinous deed of the centuries.

In the Almighty's having Messiah put to death, He was having Him to make His soul "an offering for sin." John the Baptist had this thought in mind when he, in pointing to the Lord Jesus, said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

According to Isaiah 53:10 after the Messiah makes Himself an offering for sin, He comes to life; for, " ... he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand." This refers to His post-resurrection life and activity. He conquered the foes of the human family, came forth from the grave, bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel, and at the same time He brought to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Some people have thought that Christianity is a failure. Not so! Messiah, by His omniscience, looked down through the corridors of time and saw an innumerable company of people who desire truth and who want to be in fellowship with God. Thus, according to the prophecy, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." According to the same verse it is "by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities." No one can believe on Him of whom they have never heard. It is therefore necessary that the gospel of the grace of God and of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ be preached to men. The Lord told Cornelius that he should send to Joppa for one man whose name was Simon and who would tell him words whereby he and his household might be saved. Thus it is by the knowledge of the Saviour that men are brought into right relationship with the Deity. When they accept Jesus Christ as their personal sacrifice, He bears their iniquities and they go free.

Because of the supreme sacrifice that the Messiah makes in behalf of the salvation of all believers, God apportions His part among the great—as we see in 53:12. He is given the place of preeminence, "... because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors." In His dying, He bore the sin of many, and, as He did so, He "made intercession for the transgressors." This specific prophecy was fulfilled in the cry of our Lord Jesus Christ when He said to the Father, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Everyone who is unprejudiced and unbiased can see in this marvelous passage in Isaiah a clear, definite picture of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My friend, if you have never accepted His atonement, do so today. You have no promise of tomorrow. In Christ there is salvation and in Him alone.

ISRAEL AND THE MILLENNIAL JERUSALEM

Chapter 54

Isaiah, chapter 54, constitutes a literary unit or a single discourse. It must therefore be studied as a whole. At the same time one must see its connection with that which has gone before in order to appreciate it properly. The oracle begins with these words: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Jehovah" (54:1).

In a most dramatic manner the prophet burst forth with the oracle of chapter 54 after he had given us the marvelous message regarding the "servant of Jehovah"—Messiah—in Isaiah 52:13—53:12. At first sight there seems to be no close connection between the oracle which we are studying this month and that concerning the servant of Jehovah and His sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection, which we had last month. But upon further study the connection is seen to be very close. The prophet—seeing what the crucifixion of the Messiah accomplishes, recognizing that in 53:1-9 is the penitential confession of the remnant of Israel in the-year 1945-plus, and knowing that the Messiah will return when Israel thus confesses and pleads for Him to come back—naturally bursts forth in this paean of glory, which describes the blessedness of the Jewish people and the great increase of the nation. In other words, if there were no Isaiah 52:13-53:12, there could be no Isaiah, chapter 54. The first is the cause, the latter the effect—so far as Israel is concerned.

When we turn back to 51:17 and read through 52:6, we see that our prophet compared Jerusalem, the capital and mother city of the Jewish people, to a woman lying prostrate in the dust. This representation of Israel in these chapters is likewise borrowed from chapter 49:14-21. Thus the figure introduced in chapter 49 is carried forward and reappears in chapters 51, 52, and 54. Naturally it has the same connotation in this last appearance as it does in the former passages. Thus we are justified in reaching the conclusion that in our present chapter the prophet was speaking to Jerusalem under his favorite symbolism of a woman. This interpretation is confirmed by the contents of the rest of the chapter.

The Married Wife and the Barren Woman

"Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Jehovah. 2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not: lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. 3 for thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall possess the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited" (Isa. 54:1-3).

With ecstasy and joy the prophet addressed Jerusalem, thinking of her in terms of Sarah, the great ancestress of the Jewish people. There was a period in her life when she was barren. Finally she reached the age of eighty-nine years without having any posterity. The Lord performed a biological miracle upon her body and upon that of her husband Abraham, which made possible the birth of Isaac. This personal history of Sarah furnished the imagery and the language of the prophet in the present passage. He passed over, in his thinking, the period when Jerusalem was married to Jehovah, the time from the Exodus from Egypt to the overthrow of the nation in 70 A.D. Looking at the present time when Israel is scattered among the nations and Jerusalem is trodden down by the Gentiles, Isaiah thought of the holy city as being desolate and barren—as was Sarah before God performed a biological, creative act upon her body. At the conclusion of this period of barrenness, which terminates at the time Israel makes her national, penitential confession, which will be, as we have seen in our study of chapter 53, made in the year 1945-plus, Jehovah, her husband, will re-marry her. The spiritual, biological miracle will be performed and then more will be the children of the barren than of the married woman—more will be the children of the millennial Jerusalem than were the children of the Jerusalem during the period from the national calamity of 70 A.D. to the time of Israel's return to God.

To show that this interpretation is correct and is confirmed by the inspired Apostle Paul I now wish to look at this quotation which is given in Galatians 4:27. In order that we might see it in its connection, I will quote Galatians 4:21-31: "21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? 22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the free woman. 23 Howbeit the *son* by the handmaid is born after the flesh; but the *son* by the free-woman *is born* through promise. 24 Which things contain an allegory: for the *women* are two covenants; one from mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; Break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: For more are the children of the desolate than of her that hath the husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, so also it is now. 30 Howbeit what saith the scripture? Cast out the handmaid and her son: for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. 31 Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a handmaid, but of the freewoman."

In this quotation the Apostle drew an analogy between Hagar, Ishmael, Mount Sinai, the Mosaic covenant, and Jerusalem that was standing in his day, on the one hand, and Sarah, Isaac, the new covenant, and the Jerusalem that is from above, on the other hand. He gives an allegorical interpretation of Hagar and that for which she stands and Sarah and the things for which she stands. Thus in this passage the Apostle placed antitheses: Hagar on the one hand is opposed to Sarah on the other; Ishmael is the opposite of Isaac. The old covenant, promulgated at Sinai, is the exact opposite of the new covenant of grace. Sinai, in Arabia, where the law was given, declared the Apostle, lines up with the Jerusalem that was of that day and time, which was in bondage with all her children. Opposed to the Jerusalem that then was is the Jerusalem which is from above and which is the mother of us all. Thus the Jerusalem that is from above is antithetical to the Jerusalem of Paul's day in Palestine. As proof of his proposition he quoted Isaiah 54:1. This passage appears as verse 27 of Galatians, chapter 4. In quoting from our passage, the Apostle applied Isaiah 54:1 to the Jerusalem that is from above, which is the mother of us all. But, as we have seen from the facts of the context in Isaiah, the passage primarily refers to the millennial Jerusalem. Was Paul, who was guided by the Holy Spirit, wrong in his interpretation of this passage and in his applying it to the Jerusalem that is above? No one who believes the Bible to be the Word of God will assent to any such error. No, the Apostle did not make a misapplication or misinterpretation of the passage. But in order that we might understand his interpretation, we must investigate further, and in doing so we shall see that there is perfect harmony between the meaning of Isaiah on the one hand and Paul on the other.

The writer of Hebrews (I am convinced that the Apostle Paul was the author of this letter) did not speak of the "Jerusalem that now is" but rather of one which is in the future. Hear him. "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned without the camp. 12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered with-out the gate. 13. Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14 For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after *the city* which is to come" (Heb. 13:11-14).

In the fourteenth verse of this quotation we see that the writer was looking for a city which is in the future. In his thinking, therefore, he was contrasting the Jerusalem which was in existence when he wrote with the Jerusalem which is yet to come—the one which at the present time is above, but which will in the future, at the proper time, come. Thus in chapter 13 of the Hebrew letter we obtain supplemental information regarding the Jerusalem that is above.

We get another glimpse of this Jerusalem of the future in the following passage: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their

own. 15 And if indeed they had been mindful of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:13-17).

Those dying in the faith, not having received the promises but having seen them and greeted them from afar are, as we see from the context, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. Abraham left the land of his nativity for the Promised Land. As we see from Hebrews 11:10, he was looking "for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Our Lord declared that Abraham saw His day and was glad. The time which he was granted to see was none other than Christ's day in the great Millennial Age. This city in quest of which Abraham left his native soil is, in Heb. 11:10, spoken of as having foundations whose maker and builder is God. It is a heavenly city. It is one which God has prepared for His faithful servants. It is heavenly in that it is now in heaven. God is the architect and the builder of its foundations. It is a prepared city. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with all the saved of the ancient world, will dwell in that city. Then many shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom (Matt. 8:11).

Once more we get another view of this same city, Jerusalem, of which Isaiah and Paul spoke in the passages to which we have just referred.

"18 For ye are not come unto *a mount* that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19 and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them; 20 for they could not endure that which was enjoined. If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; 21 and so fearful was the appearance, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: 22 but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than *that of* Abel. 25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned *them* on earth, much more *shall not we escape* who turn away from him that *warneth* from heaven: 26 whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. 27 And this *word*, Yet once more, signified the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. 28 Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: 29 for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:18-29).

The children of Israel, under the leadership of Moses, came out to Mount Sinai, where God delivered the law to her. When, from the heights of the mountain, the Almighty spoke the Ten Words, so fearful were the demonstrations that terror struck to the hearts of all. Even Moses trembled with fear (Heb. 12:18-21). But Christians have not come to such a mountain, quaking and smoking, as was Sinai. On the contrary, they have come "unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" whose blood "speaketh better than *that of* Abel." The writer declares that we have come to this Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, and to the heavenly Jerusalem. We certainly are in touch and in fellowship with those that are therein. This *is* true in the spiritual sense of the term, but not literally. Will we ever come to it literally? Most assuredly.

In verse 25 the writer held up the Israelites who rejected God and refused to give heed to His words as an example of warning to his readers today not to reject Him who has spoken from heaven. This one who has warned them from heaven is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who came from heaven, delivered His message of grace and truth, and warned against anyone's rejecting such a message of love. It was His voice, according to verse 26, which shook the earth at Sinai, at the giving of the law. He has promised, however, through Haggai (2:6) saying; "Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven." Let us note that this is a promise, which the Lord has made to His people and yet it involves shaking not only the earth, but also the heavens. How can such cosmic convulsions contain a promise to the saints of God? This question is answered in the next verse: "And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:27). In the Lord's shaking both heavenly and earthly things, He is acting in order that He might remove the things that are of a transitory nature to the end that He might establish a permanent order. The conclusion which the Apostle Paul drew from this promise is expressed in the following verses: "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire" (vss. 28, 29). After the Lord has removed temporary things by this universal upheaval, He establishes a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Thus the establishment, of this permanent kingdom follows the removal of the temporary things. Since the Apostle has been speaking of this heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, since in this connection he speaks about the removal of the temporary, transitory things in order that the permanent and eternal things may be established, and since the establishment of this permanent kingdom follows the shaking of the heavens and the earth, we must conclude that Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, will be established after this universal shaking takes place. But since this reference to the shaking of the heavens and the earth is a quotation from Haggai's prophecy, it is necessary for us to see this prediction in its original connection in order properly to evaluate it in the application which the Apostle makes of it.

"In the seventh *month*, in the one and twentieth *day* of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying, 3 Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? 4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work: for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts, 5 *according to* the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit abode among you: fear ye not. 6 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. 9 The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Haggai 2:1-9).

Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, at the time of the restoration from the Exile, were busily engaged in the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. God sent a message through the prophet Haggai to both the governor and the high priest, encouraging them to press forward in the work and assuring them that He was with them accordingly as He had covenanted with their forefathers when they came out of Egypt and the Spirit abode among them. The special encouragement at this time came in the form of the promise that the Lord would yet once, in a little while, shake both "the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land"—as well as the nations; and that the precious things of all the nations should come, and that He would fill "this house with glory." He declared that the silver and the gold belonged to Him. The latter glory of this house, therefore, promised the Lord, "shall be greater than the former." What is the meaning of this language? Why was it spoken? There were certain ones present who had seen the Temple as

it had been erected by Solomon. It was indeed the most magnificent structure ever erected upon this earth. The Temple which Zerubbabel was then building was indeed insignificant in comparison with Solomon's structure. Nevertheless, Zerubbabel's Temple was identified as the Temple of God. The edifice which Solomon had erected was spoken of as "this house" (Zerubbabel's Temple) in its former glory. Then the Lord assured these leaders that the latter glory of this house would be greater than even the glory of Solomon's Temple. In other words, this same Temple of God in Jerusalem, which shall be built after God has shaken both the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the dry land will be "this house" in its latter glory. The Temple that will stand in Jerusalem during the Millennial Age will be built by our Lord himself (Zech. 6:9-15). When the Temple of God in all its glory is thus built in Jerusalem, the Lord "in this place [Jerusalem]" will give peace (Haggai 2:9).

The facts of this context show that the shaking of which Haggai was speaking and to which Paul referred in Hebrews, chapter 12, is the cosmic convulsions which will occur during the Tribulation and immediately prior to the Millennial Age. The facts of this context will allow no other interpretation. By the shaking referred to in Haggai's prophecy is meant the shaking of things in the Tribulation. Thus there will be then dissolved the temporary things in order that the unshakable things might be established, namely, the things of the Millennial Age.

In the light that comes to us from Haggai's prophecy, which Paul quoted in Hebrews, chapter 12, we see that in referring to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, Paul was speaking of the realities which shall be established upon earth after the Tribulation—when Jesus returns. From these New Testament passages, therefore, when they are all studied in their context and correlated properly, we see that the "Jerusalem that is above" is in heaven now, but will come down to earth when Jesus returns at the conclusion of the Tribulation to establish His reign of righteousness upon the earth. In the light of all these facts we see that Paul, in Galatians, chapter 4, properly interpreted Isaiah 54:1 literally as is demanded by its original context.

We must not confound this heavenly Jerusalem, this Mount Zion, this city of the living God, (of which Isaiah and Paul have been speaking) with the new Jerusalem which comes down out of the eternal heavens and rests upon the eternal earth. They are entirely different. Neither must we confound the new heavens and the new earth mentioned in Isaiah 65:17ff, 66:22-24, and II Peter 3:1-13 with the new heavens and the new earth of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. The facts of each of the contexts show that both Isaiah and Peter were talking about the new heavens and the new earth that God will establish at the end of the Tribulation—after the things that can be shaken are removed in order that the permanent eternal things of the Millennial Age might be established. But John, in Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, was talking about the eternal Jerusalem that comes down out of the eternal heavens and rests upon the eternal earth. We must remember that at the end of the Millennial Age the prediction of our Lord regarding the passing away of heaven and earth will be fulfilled at the judgment of the great white throne, which follows immediately the Millennium. At that time the present heavens and earth pass out of existence (Rev. 20:11).

From Ezekiel's prophecy (chaps. 40, 47, and 48) we know that the millennial Jerusalem—which will be the marvel of all the ages past—with its suburbs—will be a city ten miles square. On the south end of the mountain of the height of Israel, this city will be the joy of the whole earth. But the eternal Jerusalem that comes down out of the eternal heavens and rests upon the eternal earth will be a city that will be a perfect cube, fifteen hundred miles in every direction. Thus the Jerusalem of which Isaiah and Paul were speaking, though glorious beyond description, will be insignificant in comparison with the eternal Jerusalem, our everlasting home.

After this long discussion of passages related to Isaiah 54:1, let us now return to the exposition of the remaining part of the chapter. In verses 2 and 3 Isaiah, seeing in vision the future of the Jewish people and thinking of Jerusalem, the mother city, as a woman, urges her to enlarge the place of her tent, stretch forth curtains, lengthen the cords, and

strengthen the stakes, because her family has increased very, very greatly. Thus in this pictorial way the prophet foretold the establishment, the enlargement, and the beautification of the millennial Jerusalem.

The Period of Israel's Widowhood

"4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth; and the reproach of thy widowhood shalt thou remember no more. 5 For thy Maker is thy husband; Jehovah of hosts is his name: and the Holy One of Israel is thy Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. 6 For Jehovah hath called thee as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, when she is cast off, saith thy God. 7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8 In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting lovingkindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer.

9 For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10 For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my lovingkindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith Jehovah that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:4-10).

Seeing what is in store for Jerusalem and her inhabitants, the prophet urged her not to fear nor be amazed; for she, when this vision materializes, will never be put to shame. At that time she will forget the shame of her youth, when she was in Egypt, and the reproach of the period of her widowhood, the time when she has been set aside because of disobedience during the Christian Era.

Jehovah her Maker is her husband. As we have seen repeatedly, the word Jehovah has four different connotations. The context of each instance must determine its significance. In Isaiah 50:1-3 Jehovah, King Messiah, denies that He has given Jerusalem a bill of divorcement. Since the prophet is here speaking of the same Jerusalem, obviously the speaker is none other than Jehovah the Messiah, who represents Himself as her husband. He is also her Redeemer and shall be recognized as the God of the whole earth. After this long period of separation—Jerusalem's period of widowhood—Jehovah her husband calls her again "as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, when she has been cast off." With assuring words He declared that He had forsaken her only for a small moment, but that with great mercies He will yet gather her children. It was in overflowing wrath that He hid his face from her for a moment; but with everlasting, loving-kindness will He have mercy upon her and redeem her.

Hosea, his wife Gomer, and his children were chosen of God to be living symbols settling forth the relationship between King Messiah and Israel, especially laying emphasis upon Israel's unfaithfulness and the period of her widowhood, during which time she is put away. Of course during this time Gomer was not allowed to marry another, but had to wait for the time to come when Hosea could take her back into marital relations. For the scriptural account of this symbolic significance of the prophet's family, see Hosea, chapters 1-3.

Though Israel is represented in the Old Testament as the wife of Jehovah, King Messiah, there is no conflict with the New Testament teaching concerning the church's being the bride of Christ the Lamb. There was a certain relationship which the Messiah sustained to fleshly Israel, and by the prophets, Isaiah and Hosea, that relationship was represented under the figure of marital relations. Messiah also sustained a special and peculiar relation to the church of the New Testament era. This relation, though of a much higher and a closer nature than that existing between Israel and Messiah, is also represented by the marital tie. Though we may not be able to harmonize these two lines of teaching thoroughly, we can believe them and await further light upon them. It may appear to Israel that God has been unjust in His dealings with her. When the Tribulation burst forth upon the world, many in Israel, especially those who do not know the Word, probably will conclude that the thorough-going, devastating judgments will annihilate the race from the globe, just as the

waters of Noah did in the time of the patriarchs. After the Flood the Lord swore that He would nevermore destroy the earth with a flood. In the same manner, the prophet assured the people of Israel, that the Lord will not be angry with her forever. Though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, the loving-kindness of the Lord for Israel will never vanish, neither will His covenant of peace be cancelled.

A Vision of Millennial Jerusalem

"11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set thy stones in fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12 And I will make thy pinnacles of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of precious stones. 13 And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of thy children. 14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee" (Isa. 54:11-14).

Jerusalem has undergone some forty-odd sieges during historic times. Truly she has been afflicted and tempest-tossed. But in the verses just quoted there appears a vision of how the Lord will create and build Jerusalem anew and make her the joy of the whole earth. We are to understand the precious stones and jewels mentioned in this description as being literal. There is nothing that would point in any other direction.

All of the children, as well as the adults, will be taught of God and great will be the peace of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Jeremiah speaks of all of the people and of their knowing the Lord, even from the least to the greatest. Zechariah tells of the numbers of children that will be playing in the streets of that blessed, holy city.

When the Lord establishes Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth in fulfillment of this and other prophecies, He will do this in righteousness. Nevermore will there be oppression of any Israelite—or of any other person. All things that are frightful and injurious will have passed away. Peace and joy will be the order of the day.

Promise of Protection

"Behold, they may gather together but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall because of thee. 16 Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the fire of coals, and bringeth forth a weapon for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. 17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness which is of me saith Jehovah" (Isa. 54:15-17).

In these verses the prophet is carried forward to the end of the age, as is evident from the flow of thought. He sees the nations of the earth gathering together against Israel and his beloved city, Jerusalem. This is the same vision as that of Zechariah 14:1ff. In the latter passage, however, the Lord says that He will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. In the Isaiah prediction, on the other hand, He says that they are not gathering there by Him. There seems to be a flat contradiction. But when all the facts are taken into consideration there is perfect harmony. Each of these statements is made from a different angle. This might be illustrated by such a passage as Isaiah 10:5-7. The Assyrian, Sennacherib, was to go against Jerusalem, according to this passage, of his own free will and accord. He would be prompted by the desire for gain and for exploiting the nation. Though he was free to do as he chose—within certain limits—the Lord was the one who was overruling and was bringing him against His Chosen People in order to punish them for their wrongdoing. Thus from one angle God could say that He was bringing Sennacherib against the Jews; but from another standpoint, He could declare that He was not but that Sennacherib was coming of his own accord. The situation seems to be similar in these two instances.

The prophet furthermore, in verse 15, assured Israel that whoever gathers against her should fall because of her. God has threatened to curse the one who curses Israel. All of those nations throughout the centuries that have persecuted the

Jews have gone down in utter defeat eventually and have largely disappeared from human history. Both the Babylonians and Assyrians disappeared practically from the historic scene. Those in modern times who have persecuted the Jews have become second rate powers. Look at Germany today! She is where she is—largely because of her ill-treating Israel. No weapon that is formed against God's Chosen People shall prosper. Moreover, every tongue that rises up against Israel in judgment at the time here foreseen shall not do so with impunity. On the contrary, the judgment of God will fall upon all her enemies.

On the other hand, those who are servants of Jehovah will inherit this great millennial Jerusalem with all of its rights and privileges, and their righteousness shall be of Him. This is a reference to imputed righteousness. Man's righteousness, in the sight of God, is as a filthy garment. But the righteousness of which the Lord here speaks is His own righteousness which He gives to those who come and accept Him by faith. Jeremiah, in speaking of King Messiah, said that He shall be known as "Jehovah our righteousness." This is an Old Testament way of speaking of the righteousness of our blessed Lord in His satisfying all the demands of the holy law and of His sufferings in our stead. When we by faith accept Him and His atonement, His righteousness is imputed to us. The stroke that was due to fall upon us fell upon Him and by His stripes we are healed. May we avail ourselves of this righteousness and walk in His light, thus glorifying Him.

A CALL TO ISRAEL TO REPENT

Chapters 55, 56 and 57

Isaiah, chapters 55, 56, and 57 constitute a single discourse of the prophet. This being a fact, the material constituting these chapters should never have been divided into chapters as they are but should have remained a single literary division of the Book of Isaiah. One must therefore study these three chapters as a unit in order to see the force of each statement.

Focusing the Camera

In order to take a picture that is clear and well defined, one must focus his camera properly. Otherwise the picture, photographically speaking, will be "fuzzy." The same principle obtains with reference to our obtaining a clear conception of many passages of scripture. Changing the figure from one of photography to that of portrait painting, I would say that we must view the portraits of the Scriptures from the proper perspectives, otherwise we lose materially in our evaluation of many passages of the Word. This principle is especially true with reference to the chapters which we are now to study, for there are four basic assumptions made by the prophet when he delivered this discourse. It is therefore necessary to call attention, in a brief manner, to these four lines of thought assumed by the prophet.

In the first place, the prophet kept the people of Israel upon the tiptoes of expectation, looking for Messiah's sudden appearance. This principle is clearly seen in the following quotation:

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living. Wait for Jehovah: Be strong, and let thy heart take courage; Yea, wait thou for Jehovah" (Ps. 27:13,14).

The goodness of Jehovah mentioned in this passage is His goodness embodied in His personal appearance. (Examine Exodus 32:12-34:9.) David therefore was buoyed up by the hope that Jehovah would appear during his own lifetime. In Psalm 37:7,9,34 David exhorted the people to "wait for Jehovah." The waiting here is, as we see from a study of the entire psalm, waiting for His personal appearance upon earth to establish His kingdom of glory. When the Lord announced to Hezekiah that he was to get his affairs in order because of his having to die, the king complained, "I shall not see Jehovah, *even* Jehovah in the land of the living." From this language we see that Hezekiah likewise was expecting Jehovah to appear in his lifetime.

The Lord thus kept Israel upon the alert looking forward to Messiah's appearance. He continued to act upon this principle until He gave the revelation found in Daniel, chapter 9. In this oracle it was disclosed that the Messiah would be cut off—executed for the sins of the world—sixty-nine weeks of years, 483 years, after the issuing of the decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem after Babylonian captivity (for full discussion of this question see my volume, *Messiah: His First Coming Scheduled*). Since, however, the prophet did not reveal Messiah's age at the time of His execution, the people who lived after Daniel gave this revelation would not know at what time Messiah would be born. His appearance upon earth therefore was still unrevealed. Thus from that time on the people of Israel were still waiting anxiously the birth and appearance of King Messiah.

A second proposition assumed by Isaiah in the sermon which we are studying was the existence of the Church Age. An examination of a number of Old Testament passages shows that the prophets clearly revealed, during Old Testament times, the entire redemptive career of King Messiah consisting of His first coming, His being rejected, His ascension to the right hand of the throne of God, His session there during the present age, His return to this earth at the conclusion of this age, and His reign upon the earth during the Kingdom Age. This entire redemptive career was set forth by King David in Psalm 110:1,2:

"Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Jehovah will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

Speaking dramatically, I would say that when the curtain rises in Psalm 110, the scene is laid in Jerusalem. Messiah is present and the leaders, backed up by the populace, are hostile to Him. When they take this attitude, God in heaven invites Him to leave earth, to sit, at His right hand, and to remain there until the Almighty puts Messiah's enemies under His feet. When this time arrives, the Jewish people who are hostile to Him at His first coming enthusiastically welcome Him. At His second coming He mounts the throne of David and reigns in Jerusalem during the Kingdom Age. The period between the two comings here foretold, during which Messiah is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, is unquestionably the present Christian Dispensation.

Again we see that the present age was clearly foretold by Isaiah in 61:1-3: "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to build up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening *of the prison to* them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified."

In verse 1 the prophet foretold the personal ministry of the Messiah at His first coming. When He appears in fulfillment of this prediction, He proclaims "the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God." The day of vengeance is unquestionably the great Tribulation, a period of seven years. Since the prophet compared the Tribulation to a *day*, and since he spoke of the present age of Jehovah's favor as a *year*, we are logical in assuming that an approximate ratio exists between the period of Jehovah's favor and that of His vengeance which obtains between a year and a day. This position is unassailable. At the conclusion of the day of vengeance, Messiah appoints those that mourn in Zion—the converted remnant of Israel—to positions of authority in His kingdom. Thus from these two passages, and from many others that could be mentioned, one sees that the Christian Dispensation was clearly outlined in the Old Testament.

The third assumption of the Prophet Isaiah was that the people constituting his audience understood, at least in a limited way, that there would be a group of people, largely of Gentile origin, who would be servants of God during this Christian Era. In fact, Moses foretold the church:

"They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God;
They have provoked me to anger with their vanities:
And I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation" (Deut. 32:21).

Isaiah likewise spoke of the church in 65:1: "I am enquired of by them that asked not *for me*; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." That I am correct in thus interpreting these passages as referring to the body of believers of the present time is seen by the further fact that Paul, in Romans 10:19,20, quoted these two passages and applied them to the body of believers today. These facts show that the prophets of the Old Testament did foresee and did speak of the believers, of the present age.

Further confirmation of this position is seen in the statement made by the Apostle Peter in Acts 3:24: "Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days." From this quotation we see that the Old Testament prophets, from Samuel onward, spoke of "these days," the Christian Dispensation. They spoke therefore of these days and the present spiritual setup. Peter was careful to say that they *spoke* of these things, but refrained from saying that all of them wrote or recorded all of their messages pertaining to this subject.

Doubtless there were many discourses delivered by the prophets, in the power of the Holy Spirit, which they did not record. Such is the necessary inference to be drawn from Acts 3:24.

Again, the Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 3:1-6, informs us that the church was made known to former generations but not with the same degree of clarity and fullness of details as it has been revealed in the present dispensation to the Apostles and prophets. Moreover, the Apostle Peter, in I Peter 1:10-12, declared that the prophets foretold the grace that should come unto us during this present Christian Age. It was revealed to them that they were ministering unto us and not unto themselves in their foretelling the grace that is offered to and extended to all peoples now. The facts that were withheld from them were "what time or what manner of time"—the spiritual setup—of the present era. These references and others that could be given show clearly that the prophets foresaw the body of believers of the present era.

Moreover, the prophets saw the rapture of the church of the present day. This fact is seen in Paul's quoting Isaiah 25:8 in I Corinthians 15:54 and in his declaring that Isaiah's prediction was fulfilled in the rapture. Furthermore, Hosea (chap. 13. vss. 13,14) likewise foretold the rapture, as we see in I Corinthians 15:55.

Another basic assumption of Isaiah in the chapters, which we are now studying, is the teaching and promises concerning the establishment of the kingdom of glory upon this earth under King Messiah. A good view of millennial Jerusalem and of Messiah's reign over a warless world are found in Isaiah 2:1-4 and in many, many other passages throughout the Prophets. In fact, they seemed to specialize upon predictions regarding the glorious reign of King Messiah.

If all the scriptures to which I have referred in this brief survey are studied carefully in the light of their contexts, one will see clearly that the Church Age, the church, and the rapture were revealed to the Old Testament prophets—but not with the same clarity and fullness of details as they are given in the New Testament. An examination of our present passage (Isa., chaps. 55,56,57) will show that there are echoes of these various teachings, just mentioned, throughout the prophet's discourse.

With the understanding that Isaiah assumed on the part of his audience a knowledge of the predictions regarding the matters discussed above, let us now look particularly at the time element of this discourse. In 56:1 we have this language: "Thus saith Jehovah, Keep ye justice, and do righteousness for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." This verse must be studied in the light of other statements by our prophet. In this connection one should study carefully Isaiah 40:1-11. In 40:5 we see a prediction concerning the revealing of the glory of Jehovah and all flesh seeing it together. According to verses 9 and 10 of chapter 40 announcement is to be made to Israel that her God is coming and that His arm will rule for Him. In the light of all the facts of this context it becomes apparent that the prediction of the revealing of the glory of Jehovah pertains to the personal appearance of Jehovah who comes to rule and to reign and to bring salvation to His flock, those who trust Him. In Isaiah 46:12-13 is a prediction that God will bring His righteousness and His salvation near for Israel and that this salvation will be placed in Zion for Israel His glory. This passage becomes especially luminous in the light of Isaiah 59:20,21 which foretells the coming of the Redeemer to Zion and His delivering those who turn from ungodliness in Jacob. The righteousness and the salvation to be revealed according to Isaiah 56:1 appears in the person of Israel's righteous Messiah and Deliverer.

The exhortation of 56:1 that Israel should seek justice and do righteousness in view of the revelation of God's salvation and righteousness is an appeal for Israel to live up to all the light that she has in expectation of the sudden coming of her righteous Messiah, who reappears for her deliverance. This verse therefore is a prediction of the second appearance of King Messiah.

Another note of time is seen in 57:1,2: "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*. He entereth into peace; they rest in their beds, each one that walketh in his uprightness." According to this prediction the righteous are perishing from the

earth, but no one is taking the situation seriously. Doubtless these righteous ones are dying off from natural causes and also from being persecuted. At the same time none are arising to take their places. Parallel with this thought and supplemental to it is the further prediction: "And merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*." Let us remember that this portion of Isaiah is put in poetical form, the fundamental principle of which is "Hebrew parallelism." Merciful, good men are taken away from the earth. What is the significance of this expression? It seems to be a reference to the rapture of the righteous, merciful people of God. Since Isaiah foretold the rapture, as we have already seen, and since he declared that these merciful men are taken away from the evil (the judgments of God in the Tribulation) to come, we must understand this as a reference to the rapture of the saints, the church of God. This conviction is confirmed by New Testament teachings. For instance, after Paul foretold the rapture of the church (I Thess. 4:13-18), he told the Christians that they were not in darkness that the day of the Lord (the Tribulation) should come upon them. Moreover, he urged them to live as children of light, because God has not appointed us "unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." The "wrath" mentioned here can be nothing other than the wrath of God to be poured out in the form of judgments during the Tribulation. Christians then are delivered from the wrath to come.

From the facts thus far presented we can see that Isaiah was transported across the centuries by the Spirit of God and spoke to his brethren according to the flesh in the end of this dispensation and called them to repentance in view of the removal of the church from all earthly scenes and the impending judgments of the wrath to come.

The Gospel of the Grace of God

In 55:1-3a we hear Isaiah preaching the gospel of the grace of God in vision to the Jews during the closing scenes of this age and the Tribulation. He sees the people running hither and thither expending their efforts and using their money for material things rather than the spiritual realities. He questions them and asks why they do this. That this is an offer of free grace is clear from the statement found in 55:3a: "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live ..." The people are urged to incline their ear, open their hearts, give heed to the message in order that their souls might live. God has but one plan of redemption regardless of the age during which He is dealing with men. This scheme is salvation by grace through faith. It is not of works in order that no one should glory. Everyone who has ever been saved—in pre-Christian times—has been saved by the grace of God through faith. No law could be given whereby men might be made alive and justified. During the Millennial Age men will be saved in the same manner. Thus all of the redeemed, when all earthly affairs are wound up, will be able to sing of the matchless, wonderful grace of God.

The Sure Mercies of David

In Isaiah 55:3b-5 God promises to make with Israel an everlasting covenant. Following this promise He specifies what it is, namely, the mercies guaranteed to David (vs. 3). In order to understand this passage, one must study carefully II Samuel 7:1-17 and I Chronicles 17:1-15. One should also study II Samuel 23:1-7. These passages tell what was involved in the mercies guaranteed, or assured, to David. Upon a careful study of these passages we see that all promises connected with these passages center in the personal Messiah of Israel, who appeared historically as the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the plan of God, according to Isaiah 55:4, Israel's Messiah is to be the leader and the commander of the nations of the world. This thought is enlarged upon in various passages of the Psalms and the Prophets. According to the covenant into which God entered with Abraham, his descendants—the Jews—are to become the missionary nation of the world, calling all others and bringing them to a saving knowledge of the Messiah. This promise is reiterated in 55:5 in the following

words: "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel for he hath glorified thee." This promise is enlarged upon in numbers of scriptures. When Israel sees the truth, accepts the Lord Jesus Christ, confesses her national sin, and pleads for Him to return, He will do so. Then converted Israel will call all other peoples to the Lord Jesus Christ. The converted Gentiles here are spoken of in terms of a nation that knew not God.

A Call to Israel to Repent

In verses 6-9 the prophet, speaking for God, passionately appeals to the people of Israel to seek God while He may be found. The time when He may be found is the present. Of course, since the prophet was projected into the closing scenes of this age, the time when He can be found is the time of the preaching. God gives men and women ample opportunity to accept the truth. They can reject the message and refuse to see the light until the Lord causes darkness. (Cf. Jer. 13:15-17.) Men's ideas are not those of God. Men by their philosophy cannot find God. They are therefore by the prophet urged to lay aside their ideas and accept God's ways and His ideas for the latter are as high above their ideas as heavens are above the earth.

The Certainty and Fruitfulness of the Word of God

The Word of God is sure. It is pure—as silver refined seven times (Ps. 12). The Word of God is backed up by all the power of Omnipotence. The prophet, therefore, in 55:10-13 assured his auditors that the Word shall accomplish that whereunto God has sent it. He therefore sees the fulfillment of the various predictions concerning Israel's final deliverance, the lifting of the curse, and the establishment of a reign of righteousness upon the earth. These thoughts are especially apparent in verses 12-13. In connection with these promises see Isaiah 65:17-25.

Israel Exhorted to Ready for the Lord's Return

The prophet urges his auditors, according to 56:1,2, to live up to the light that they have and to practice the revelation which God gave to them through Moses. A person must be true to the light which He has in order to be prepared for further light that God is eager to give him. One must be true to his convictions. Cornelius was living up to all the light that he had, but was praying for more. The Lord therefore told him where he could receive further light, namely, by sending for the Apostle Peter who spoke to him words whereby he and his household were saved. Israel therefore is urged to be faithful and true to the light that she has. Since God deals with all people upon the same principle, we may be certain that God will give them further light when they walk in that which they have. God gives light to people by the preaching of the Word. It is our privilege and responsibility to give to the nation of Israel the message now in order that she may turn to Him who is the light of the world. In our doing this, we shall simply be taking up the work which Isaiah here presupposes will be done.

The Hope of the Foreigner and the Eunuch

In 56:3-8 God holds out special promises to both eunuchs and foreigners who join themselves unto the Lord. A man who is a eunuch, viewed from the natural standpoint, has an occasion to be discouraged and to lose all hope. On the contrary, the Lord urges them to take heart and to look forward to the great blessings, which He has for them in the future. In conveying to them some idea of the blessedness in store for them, He declared that he would give them a name that is far better than sons and daughters, "an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." Moreover, He made special promises to the foreigners that join themselves unto Jehovah. These were known in New Testament days as proselytes. Solomon, at the dedication of the Temple, being led by the Spirit, showed that any Gentile who had a longing for Jehovah and who

desired to do His will might become a proselyte to the Jewish faith and thus receive the blessings that come to true worshipers of God. Thus all foreigners who have joined themselves to the Jewish people with an idea of worshiping the true God are urged in these verses to observe the word, which they have, to live up to the light which they have received, and are assured that they will be acceptable to the Almighty.

In this connection the Lord promised that the Gentiles who thus join themselves to Israel shall worship in the great millennial Temple, which shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. In verse 8 the prophet makes the prediction that God will gather to Israel people other than *the Jews*, who will worship and serve God acceptably.

We read of the black Jews of Abyssinia and of Chinese Jews. These people do not have Jewish features and it is evident that they are not Hebrews. Nevertheless, they adhere to the Jewish faith. Of course there are among them many perversions of the Mosaic ritual. Notwithstanding this fact, it is quite evident that they have the Mosaic Law in a corrupted form. Yet they are holding on faithfully to that which they have. It is to such people as these that Isaiah is here talking.

Israel's Pitiful Plight

In the paragraph consisting of 56:9-12 Israel is represented as a flock of sheep. The leaders are thought of as the watchmen, who are declared to be blind and to be without knowledge. Then, in the same breath, the prophet compares them to dumb dogs, that cannot bark and that lie around, dreaming and loving to slumber. There is therefore no one to take care of and to protect the flock. The prophet, seeing this situation, spoke to the beasts of the field and called them to come and to devour the nation. Beasts when used symbolically always signify civil governments. This position is seen in Daniel 7:1-14. The nations are therefore invited by the prophet to come and to destroy the flock of Israel. According to parallel passages the nations will, in the time of the end, come to devour Israel. At the conclusion of the Tribulation, all of the armies of the nations will be gathered together against Jerusalem to battle. But in the final crisis Jehovah, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, will come and bring the necessary deliverance.

In verses 11 and 12 of this passage the prophet further described the leaders of Israel, declaring that they are greedy dogs and can never get enough. He compared them to shepherds that could not understand and that turn aside always to their own interests. They constantly are seeking to engage in the gratification of their fleshly lusts. These are terrible indictments brought against the leaders of Israel. While this description does represent the leaders as a whole, we have reason to believe from other passages that there are or will be some notable exceptions to this rule.

If Isaiah were present today and were speaking to the professing church and the ministers of the Word, there is no doubt concerning his bringing even graver charges against them than he does against the Jewish leaders. Unfortunately, many ministers do not seem to realize the grave responsibilities which are resting upon them because of their position. Men who are called into the ministry should give themselves to their ministry, acting honestly and conscientiously before God all the time and working in the interest and behalf of the people to whom they minister.

The Disappearance of the Righteous from the Earth

As noted before, the disappearance of the righteous from the earth by natural as well as by foul methods, together with the removal of the church by the rapture, is set forth in 57:1,2. God has not ordained that His people who believe in Him should remain here and pass through the horrors of the great Tribulation Period. In fact, He has appointed us not unto wrath but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. This vision therefore of the removal of the godly from the earth is set forth in this marvelous passage.

Idolatry of the End Time World-Wide

The prophet addressed those who are left in the world, after the removal of the church by means of the rapture, in verses 3-10. An examination of this paragraph reveals the fact that there will be worldwide idolatry in the period of the Tribulation. Man is incurably religious. If he cannot worship the true and living God, he will make a god for himself to worship, as the pagan world has done and continues to do. Thus when the true church is removed from the earth, men will not lay the situation to heart, but will create for themselves gods of their own imagination. This is the message set forth in verses 3-8. Confirmation of this position is likewise found in Isaiah 2:20-22. We see it again in Isaiah 17:7,8. That the prophet actually foretells the universality of idolatrous worship in the end time, as set forth by these passages, may be seen by an examination of Revelation 9:20,21: "And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." The passage in Revelation is descriptive of the world situation in the first half of the Tribulation. Men are bowing down to stocks and stones, worshiping gods of their own creation.

From other predictions, however, we learn that after the church is removed by the rapture, there will be an army of 144,000 Jewish evangelists—those to whom we are now giving the truth—who will arise, who will accept Christ after the Tribulation begins, and who will conduct the world-wide revival, by means of which multiplied hosts will come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. They accept Him and come out of the great Tribulation. These facts are clearly seen in Revelation, chapter 7. When this chapter of the Apocalypse is viewed in the light of all the teaching of Revelation, it is seen that this company mentioned in Revelation, chapter 7, consists of those who accept the Lord Jesus during the first half of the Tribulation.

But in the, middle of the Tribulation the Antichrist, becoming jealous of the divine honors offered to the Deity, will demand that men and women shall no longer worship any god or goddess—not even the God of heaven. Moreover, he will issue an edict that all men must worship him. Thus idolatry—that, of worshiping the Antichrist, a man, will be brought into existence. This type of pagan worship will be the last and final attempt of man to worship others than the true God.

Idolatry is represented throughout the Old Testament under the imagery of adultery on the part of the unfaithful wife. Israel is represented likewise in the Old Testament as the wife of Jehovah. She has at various times played the harlot, going off after other gods. It is true that she was cured of gross idolatry at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Since then she has never engaged in idolatry, but she will, in the time of the Tribulation, along with other nations worship various gods, of their own manufacture. In the middle of the Tribulation, however, when the Antichrist demands that men worship him, Israel likewise will do so. This is set forth in Isaiah 57:9,10. The prophet thinks of Israel as a woman who prepares herself with all varieties of perfumes and oils and goes in to the king to commit adultery. When she engages in this worship of the king, the Antichrist, she feels a thrill of the quickening of her strength. This of course will come from satanic powers. But it will only be temporary. Sin always leaves a sting. Those of Israel who thus worship this false messiah will do it to their own hurt.

The Destruction of the Ungodly in Israel and The Salvation of the Faithful Remnant

The prophet is carried forward by the Spirit to the very end of the Tribulation and sees, in verses 11-13, the destruction of all of the apostates in Israel. These of course will be cut off out of the land of the living. On the contrary, all

those that take refuge in the Messiah shall be saved, preserved, and enter into possession of the land which God gave Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and to his seed forever. They are the ones who shall inherit God's holy mountain.

The Final Appeal to the Nation

We read in 57:14 the exhortation which the prophet gives to certain ones regarding casting up or preparing a way for the people of Israel to return to their God. He speaks of this necessary preparation in terms of the building of a road. In this connection he speaks of removing stumbling blocks from the way over which Israel, His Chosen People, are to pass in their return to Him. This prediction assumes that there are many stumbling blocks in the way. An examination of the case of Israel at the present time, of her spiritual condition, and of the problems which confront the nation, shows that these stumbling blocks may be removed and the way prepared for the Jewish people to return. When this exhortation is viewed in the light of other relevant passages, we see that, the prophet is speaking concerning the proclamation of the truth of the gospel to His Chosen People in order that they might return to God.

The Lord wants His people to return to Him. Though He is the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, He assures us through the prophets that He also dwells with the one who is of a contrite and humble spirit in order that He might revive the spirit of the humble and the heart of the contrite one. God has through the centuries, figuratively speaking, worried with Israel. But He declares that He will not continue to contend with her always. If He did the spirit would faint. The Lord cannot countenance sin with approval. His holiness will not permit such an attitude. God, therefore, must punish all sin with the proper corrective measures.

When Israel sinned, God hid His face and was wroth. He cannot do otherwise. When the Lord thus turned His back upon the nation, it went backsliding in the ways of the corrupt heart. A person or a nation may reach the point when God can no longer countenance their wrongdoing. He thus withdraws His restraining grace and power and allows him to go on in his own stubborn, willful, sinful way. This is always to his hurt.

But the prophet sees in verses 18,19 a time when God will turn to the nation and heal it. At that time He will heal Israel and restore comfort to her. He will make the nation joyful and thus create the fruit of lips, which is expressed in the following words: "Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith Jehovah; and I will heal him." The Lord will thus save and heal the penitent remnant of His people, but for the wicked and sinful among the chosen race, the stroke of judgment must fall and they must be swept into a Christless eternity, without God and without hope in the world. Thus ends this oracle.

Isaiah's Call to Israel Must Be Taken Up by Us and Given to Her in This Generation

As stated above, Isaiah was borne by the Spirit of God across the centuries and spoke in this sermon to Israel of the last generation scattered among the nations, in the end time. In it he passionately appealed to his brethren to turn from their wickedness and to follow all the light that they have.

The prophet is not here today. Messengers, other than Isaiah must come forward and must send forth this call to all Israel in this generation. Who can do this? Whose duty and whose privilege is it to sound forth this message of the gospel of the true grace of God? The answer of the Scriptures is that it is the people of God who now have His truth. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth, according to the Apostle Paul (I Tim. 3:14,15).

In Isaiah, chapter 62, the Lord shows His great interest in His ancient people and in the first five verses foretells their glorious return to Him. In verses 6 and 7 He informs us that certain ones, whom He designates as watchmen, are constantly praying that God will make Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth. Those who know how to pray are urged to give Him no

rest and to take no rest until He does make Jerusalem the capital and the metropolis of the whole world. This prediction will be fulfilled in the great Kingdom Age in the future.

In verse 10 we read an exhortation given to certain ones to prepare the way of the people of Israel which preparation takes the form of proclaiming to the Jews throughout the world the message of Messiah's coming to deliver them, at which time Jerusalem shall be called "Sought out, A city not forsaken." Then the Hebrew people will be called the redeemed of Jehovah.

The special point in this connection is that God has sent, according to verse 11, a proclamation throughout the earth, urging those who have the message concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and His redemption to proclaim this to the Jewish people. When we study Isaiah, chapters 55-57, the call of Israel to repentance, we see that we who have the truth are to take up this call that was sounded by Isaiah and to give the message to all Israel. Are we doing this? If we are not, will we do it? Let everyone who knows Jesus Christ in a personal way, answer the call of God and do what he can to give this message of salvation to lost and suffering Israel.

**THE FINAL CALL FOR ISRAEL TO LAY ASIDE FORMALISM AND WICKEDNESS
AND TO ACCEPT HER MESSIAH**

Chapters 58, 59, 60

Chapters 58, 59, and 60 constitute a single literary unit, a sermon. In chapter 58 the prophet calls upon Israel to lay aside all of her formalism and to turn to God. If she will only do this, the Messiah will come and deliver her. In 59:1-15a Isaiah portrays very vividly and graphically the prevalence of sin in Israel of the end time. Following this prediction, in 59:15b-60:3, appears a forecast of the Messiah's coming in glory and power. In 60:4-9 is a prophecy of Israel's final and complete regathering to the land of the fathers. The discourse closes with a most wonderful description of the millennial Jerusalem (60:10-22).

When a person recognizes that these three chapters constitute a single sermon, and when he notices the fact that Jehovah looks upon the situation, and, finding no one who can intercede, He puts on His garments of wrath, prepares for the battle, and comes to the earth, he sees that the entire sermon was focused upon this second coming of our Lord and the conditions that will demand His reappearance upon earth. In view of these facts, therefore, we must realize that this is God's final call to Israel of the end time to lay aside all formalism and pretension, to forsake her wickedness, and to accept her long-rejected Messiah.

Formalism Denounced

In chapter 58 we see one of the most scathing denunciations of formalism to be found anywhere in the Word of God. In verse 1 the prophet is urged to spare not, to lift up his voice like a trumpet, and to declare unto his people, the Jewish nation, their transgressions and their sins. Only those who know God and who fear Him in the correct scriptural sense of the Word will thus speak to people and expose their sins.

From verses 2-5 we see Israel of this future day seeking God and His worship, delighting in His ways, just as a nation that knows righteousness and does not forsake the ordinances of their God. Constantly they ask of Him righteous judgment—decisions relative to matters of vital importance to them. They draw near to God and delight in His service. Moreover, they fast and afflict their souls—especially at such seasons as that of Yom Kipper, the Day of Atonement. Nevertheless, their worship is not recognized by heaven, and they realize this fact and ask why it is that their services are not acceptable. To such queries the prophet shows that in the fasting of the people and in the services in which they are engaged they are not seeking the glory of God, but their own pleasure. They are holding to a form of godliness, but are denying the power thereof. Worship and service rendered in such a spirit is not acceptable to God and can never be of profit or of benefit to the worshiper. Finally the prophet asks, "Is such the fast that I have chosen? the day for a man to afflict his soul?" Even though a person bows his head as a rush and spreads forth sackcloth and ashes upon his body, the Lord will not answer such outward, formal worship.

When we compare this passage of scripture with others relating to the same time, we see that the Temple will be standing in Jerusalem and the nation of Israel will there congregate and engage in worship according to Judaism and Israel's interpretation of the Mosaic law. As we shall see in our study of Isaiah 66:1-5, the Jewish Temple will be rebuilt, the ancient sacrifices will be re-inaugurated, and Israel will in this formal manner be approaching God—but not so as to be heard on high. Moreover, when we come to the New Testament (Matt. 24:15f), we see that our Lord, in talking of the end time, assumed the existence of the Jewish Temple. Furthermore the Apostle Paul in II Thessalonians, chapter 2, assumed its existence in the end time. In Revelation 11:1-14 we see the same temple standing.

It will not benefit Israel in the least to rebuild her Temple and to re-establish her ancient sacrifices. Those have been done away with since they were fulfilled in Christ. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness unto all who believe. There is therefore no wonder that the prophet here rejects Israel's worship.

In verses 7-9a we have the first of three conditional sentences and offers that are found in verses 6-14. In this first condition the prophet introduces his statement by asking the question, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" These questions demand an affirmative answer. Instead of fasting, as the Jews according to this prediction will do and instead of engaging in religious exercises, as here foretold, they must break the bonds of wickedness and loose the yoke of bondage and treat the one with whom they have dealings fairly and honestly. Moreover, they are to deal their bread to the hungry and to assist the poor and the needy, doing these things because they love God and have a feeling for suffering humanity. Thus if they put into practice in their every day conduct the fundamental principles of life, the prophet promises, "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy healing shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of Jehovah shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry, and he will say, Here I am." In other words, if Israel will turn from her formalism and all evil, wicked practices, living up to all the light which she has, then the promise is made that her light shall break forth as the morning and her healing shall spring forth speedily. Then will her righteousness go before her and the glory of Jehovah will be her rearward. This language is an echo of the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage under Moses, as we learn in the Book of Exodus. When Israel does this, she will call, and God will answer, and her "light," who is none other than her righteous Messiah, will return and restore her to her own land.

In verses 9b-12 we have our second conditional sentence: "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke ... and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in darkness and thine obscurity be as the noonday." If Israel, according to this promise, will only trust the Lord and will live up to all the light that she has, He will give her more light. As we walk in the light, He will grant more light and opportunities to us. Cornelius, of whom we read in Acts, chapter 10, was living up to all the truth that he had and was seeking for more light. The result was that the Lord gave him special privileges and advantages. But the Saviour has no pets. If anyone, regardless of who he is, will only live up to the light that God gives him, the Lord will give him more light and will lead him onward. Those of Israel who thus fulfill the conditions of this second proposition will be guided continually and safely and will become like a watered garden and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. They shall return to the land of the fathers and shall build up the old waste places of many generations.

The third conditional sentence is found in verses 13, 14. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ... then shalt thou delight thyself in Jehovah; and I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth; and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it." According to this proposition as with the two former ones, all Israel will have to do is to live up to the light that she has, walking forward as God leads her. Then He will give her the full light of day, and her "light," who is none other than her righteous Messiah, will come and bring the long desired rest and victory.

The Wickedness of the Chosen People in the End Time

In Isaiah 59:1-15a we have one of the dark pictures which shows to us the spiritual condition of Israel in the end of this age. To the people of that time it will appear as if the heavens are brass and as if the Lord is no longer interested in

His Chosen people. But the prophet in 59:1-8 shows that the trouble is not with the Lord, but with Israel herself. He has just as much power now as ever and will always have. Moreover He can hear their petitions just as much as he heard the prayers of Moses, Samuel, and other great warriors of faith in the past.

The trouble, according to verses 2 and 3, is that her sins and her iniquities have separated between her and her God and He has hidden His face from her. From verse 3 we see that Israel's hands will be defiled with blood and her fingers with iniquity. Moreover their lips speak lies and their tongues mutter wickedness. None at that time will be suing in righteousness and pleading in truth. They will love vanity and speak lies, will conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity. According to verse 5 they hatch adders' eggs and weave spiders' webs. He who eats of those eggs dies, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. In other words, the prophet says that everything which they do is with design, that wickedness and impure motives prompt all actions. The webs which they weave will not be for garments, neither will their works cover them. Their works are those of iniquity and violence. They are swift to do evil and they haste to shed blood. Their thoughts are of iniquity, and desolation and destruction are in their paths, but the way of peace they do not know and there is no justice in their goings.

Are we to take this language in the absolute or the relative sense? From what we learn in other passages relating to the same time, we know that there will be those who will be exceptions to this general rule. This language therefore is that of a relative character and not of the absolute sense.

It is hard to see how such people, who have enjoyed so much light as the Hebrew people have, can yet sink to such depths as are here foretold. But these characteristics are not simply those of the nation of Israel. When we look in the New Testament, we see that even in the so-called Christian world there will be those who sink to the same depths or even lower than these do. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. There is no telling what one will do.

In verses 9-15a the prophet makes a confession for the people of Israel of the end time. Thus he is carried forward in vision and is let down in the midst of the crooked and perverse generation of that future day. He feels the bond of affinity joining him to his brethren according to the flesh. He therefore confesses that justice is far from the nation and that righteousness never overtakes them. They "look for light, but, behold, darkness; for brightness, but we walk in obscurity." They will be like men groping for the wall; like the blind they grope as they who have no eyes, they stumble in the noonday just as one would in the evening, or at twilight. They roar like bears and mourn sore like doves. They look for someone to give them a square deal, but none is forthcoming. They plead for salvation, but it is far from them. The transgressions of the nation will be multiplied. Their sins will testify against them, their transgressions and their iniquities will be before them constantly. They will commit presumptuous sins and will knowingly deny Jehovah and turn away from following their God. Thus the generation as a group will be abandoned of the Lord.

The Coming Messiah

In verses 59:15b-60:3 we have a vivid, graphic description of the return of the Messiah in glory at the conclusion of the Tribulation Period. God must punish wickedness wherever He finds it and in whomever it is discovered, whether it be the individual or the nation, whether it be in Israel or among the Gentiles.

We are told in verse 15b that Jehovah sees this condition of the nation and is highly displeased that there is no justice. Moreover He looks to see if there is a man and is amazed that there is no intercessor. Of course this language is what we speak of as *anthropomorphic*, that is, we speak of God as if He were a person possessing a human body and the faculties of the same. According to II Chronicles 16:9 "... the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." When Israel at Sinai made the golden calf, the

Lord said to Moses for him to move away to allow Him to destroy the entire nation. But Moses fell down in the breach and pleaded for the Lord to slay him, but to spare His Chosen People whom He had just delivered from Egyptian bondage. See, for instance, Exodus 32:30-35; Psalm 106:23. Thus Moses had power with God and his intercession preserved the nation from extermination on that occasion. Moreover, Noah, Daniel, and Job had great power in prayer with the Lord, as we see in Ezekiel 14:12-20. In Psalm 99:6 we learn that Moses, Aaron, and Samuel likewise had power with God in prayer. Jeremiah mentions these, too, as being able to pray the effectual, fervent petition (Jer. 15:1).

But in the end time there will not be any man in Israel whose spiritual stature and standing with God will be such that he can step into the breach and can spare the nation from judgment. A like situation existed in the days of Ezekiel, as we see in chapter 22:30: "And I sought for a man among them, that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none." That Isaiah 59:16 is thus to be interpreted is evident from the fact that, in verse 20, we see that there will be those who turn from transgression in Zion unto God. This fact demands that we understand verses 15 and 16 as language used in the relative sense. In other words there will be no outstanding spiritual giant who will be able to take the situation in hand as did Moses.

Under these conditions there is but one thing which a righteous and a holy God can do and which is set forth in verses 16b-18: "Therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it upheld him. And he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a mantle. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, wrath to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense." In this passage the Lord Jehovah is represented as a warrior who prepares himself to go into action. Of course He spoke of Himself in terms of the equipment of soldiers of that day and time. Another picture of this same battle action of the Messiah is set forth in 63:1-7—a passage which we shall soon study.

According to 59:18 the Lord, when He comes and thus deals with His adversaries, will mete out justice to them according to their deeds and their actions. Not only will He deal with Israel, but also with the nations of the earth, as is shown in the last statement of verse 18.

When He thus appears upon the earthly scene and recompenses all His enemies, He will introduce a new era. At that time all people will fear the name of Jehovah from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof. At the time of His coming, however, He will come as a mighty, rushing stream, which is driven by the Spirit of God. This figure indicates the rapidity and the irresistible force and speed with which He will return to earth. This same thought is set forth in the smiting stone which strikes the image of Daniel, chapter 2, on the feet and which destroys the metallic image, the symbol of the four world governments from Nebuchadnezzar's day unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Messiah returns, He will come to those in Jacob who turn away from transgression and sin. There has always been a faithful remnant in Israel. There always will be, no matter to what depths mankind or any portion of the race plunges, found faithful, honest, conscientious souls who want to do the will of God and who, to the best of their ability and strength and power, are doing it.

When Messiah thus returns, He will enter into a covenant with the faithful remnant of His ancient people and will put His words in their mouths and His spirit in their souls. He will never reject them anymore and they will be faithful and true to His covenant.

With such a vision of the coming of Messiah to execute vengeance on His enemies, to enter into covenant relationship with His faithful people, and to show mercy to them, the prophet shouts to Zion, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee" (Isa. 60:1). In this passage the nation is represented as lying prostrate upon the

ground. This fact is seen in the exhortations which are found in Isaiah 51:17 and 52:1,2. Thus in our verse the prophet is simply using the same imagery. She is therefore to arise and to welcome Him at this coming.

Immediately after the days of the Tribulation, darkness will envelop the globe. This is seen by the utterance of our Lord found in Matthew 24:29. That is what is foretold here in Isaiah 60:2,3. Darkness and gross darkness will encircle the globe. Then suddenly the sign of the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, with power and glory, will lighten the entire earth.

The Gathering of Israel

The prophet, continuing his figure of Israel's lying prostrate upon the ground, in verses 4-9 foretells the return of the Jews to the land of their fathers. Zion, the mother city, is to lift up her eyes round about and see all her sons and daughters coming from afar. Isaiah sees them coming from the east, using the regular method of travel of the ancient East, namely, riding upon camels and dromedaries. Then he looks into the skies and sees those who "fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows" (vs. 8). These whom he sees are actually flying. Their flying reminds him of doves soaring to their homes or as floating clouds. When these words are allowed their full import, we see that this is a prediction of Israel's returning home by means of air transportation. This interpretation is demanded by a candid and an honest acceptance of the words at their literal value. There is nothing in the context to indicate a departure from the natural meaning. We therefore are forced to accept this as a prediction of air transportation. Moreover, we see, in verses 8 and 9, Jews returning to their homeland by means of the ships of Tarshish, the merchant marine of Tarshish. Who is Tarshish? When all the facts are taken into consideration, one is driven inevitably to the conclusion that this is the ancient name for Britain.

In verses 10-22 we have a marvelous description of the rebuilding of Zion. Jerusalem of the Millennial Age will be entirely different from what it is at the present time. The distance around the walls of the old city of Jerusalem is two and three-quarter miles. The millennial Jerusalem, according to the last chapters of Ezekiel, will be a city ten miles in length and ten in breadth. Its total area therefore will be one hundred square miles. The distance around it will be forty miles. It will be located on the southern extremity of the mountain of the heights of Israel. This fact is described in the latter chapters of Ezekiel.

According to Isaiah 60:10 foreigners will be employed to build up the city walls, and kings will minister unto the Jews. The reason for this is stated in the following words: "For in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee." Israel has had advantages that no other nation has ever enjoyed. With increased opportunities, there come added responsibilities. She will be punished double for all her sins; yet, when this glorious era dawns, the people will have double instead of persecution and dishonor—as we shall see in the study of Isaiah, chapter 61.

In ancient times the gates of the city were closed at sundown. This was a precautionary measure against enemies; but in the city of Jerusalem of the Millennium the gates will always be open day and night. Then the nations will bring their wealth into the city and the kings will be led captive.

The tables will be turned then from what they are now. Israel is despised, persecuted, and efforts have been made from time to time to exterminate this people from the face of the globe. But the nation of Israel is imperishable. She is the nation of destiny. She is the tail of the nations, as Moses tells us, now. But then she will be the head of the peoples of earth. That nation and kingdom, therefore, that will not serve Israel shall utterly perish from the face of the globe.

The glory of Lebanon—the cedars of Lebanon, the most glorious of ancient days—will be given unto Zion. All of the very best materials upon the face of the globe will be used in the reconstruction of the Temple, as we learn from verse 13 of this chapter. The prophet, in speaking of the sanctuary, declares, "I [Jehovah] will make the place of my feet glorious." Jehovah, then, according to this prediction, will be there in person. This prediction is in perfect harmony with Ezekiel 43:7:

"And he said unto me, Son of man, *this is* the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom and by the dead bodies of their kings in their high places." This passage is to be taken literally, at its face value. In keeping with all the Scriptures is this one which foretells that Jehovah himself will be in Zion personally and will reign there as her King. (See Zeph. 3:14-17.) At that time men will call Zion "The city of Jehovah, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." It will be thus named because Jehovah in person, the Messiah—the Lord Jesus Christ—will reign there. Jerusalem therefore will be called the throne of Jehovah. (See Jer. 3:16, 17.)

Whereas Zion has been hated and forsaken by the nations in the past, she has a glorious future before her; for, God declares, "I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." The people of Zion will share in the wealth and the blessings of the nations. The guarantee that this prophecy will be fulfilled is this: "I, Jehovah, am thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob" (vs. 16).

When Zion is thus rebuilt, gold will be used where silver now is; and brass where silver now is used and the like. Thus Zion is to be built upon a much more magnificent scale than at the present time.

There will be no need of a police force, for violence will be never more heard in the land. There will never more be any desolation, nor destructive powers that will enter the land or the city of Jerusalem. People will call her walls salvation and her gates praise.

As we see in Isaiah 4:5,6, there will be a great canopy created over Jerusalem, which will protect it from the showers and from the sunshine. This promise is in perfect accord with 60:19. The sun shall not strike it by day, neither shall the moonlight fall upon its streets, the reason being that Jehovah will be an everlasting light and Israel's God will be her glory. From His person will radiate the light that will illuminate this great, marvelous, millennial Jerusalem. The sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening. Then darkness rests upon that portion upon which the sun is not shining. There will be no day and night in Jerusalem, because the light emanating from Messiah's person will illuminate the city twenty-four hours out of every day.

There will be no wicked, unprincipled Jews, for they will all be righteous, as we see from verse 21. They, the rightful owners of the land of Palestine, will inherit the land. When they are thus established there, they will be "the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." Israel then will multiply and become a strong nation. She will become as the stars of heaven and as the sand beside the sea. Great and wonderful things are in store for the Chosen People. God will hasten the fulfillment of this prediction in His own time.

A BLUEPRINT OF MESSIANIC TIMES

Chapter 61

In this exposition of the Book of Isaiah we have come to chapter 61, which is indeed one of the most important passages of the entire book, even though it is short. It is a literary whole. In the first three verses we see the outline of Messiah's redemptive career. This sets forth in pictorial manner the first coming of the Messiah, His public ministry, His announcement regarding the Christian Dispensation to be followed by the Tribulation, the conversion of Israel, and her being appointed to the positions of honor and trust in the great Kingdom Age. In the second section, verses 4-9, we see Israel in the Kingdom Age occupying the central position among the nations of earth. Finally, in the last two verses, appears a prediction of the conversion of Israel set forth in most dramatic terms.

The Redemptive Career of King Messiah

When anyone studies the messages of the prophets, he must ask himself this question relative to any given passage if the personal pronouns, first person, are used: "Speaketh the prophet this of himself, or of another?" In the first three verses of this prophecy the speaker uses the personal pronoun *me*. Was Isaiah speaking of something that he had done or would do? Or was he impersonating another? When this passage is read carefully and each word is allowed to give forth its primary, ordinary, usual meaning, one sees that Isaiah could not perform the things foretold in the passage. In view of this fact we therefore conclude that he was not speaking of himself but of another.

Of whom then was he speaking? The answer is that he was impersonating the one who redeems mankind from the curse, and who establishes a reign of righteousness upon the earth. In other words, he was speaking for the Messiah. This truth we learn when we compare this passage with related ones.

When we recognize that the prophet was speaking for King Messiah, who is none other than God who enters the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth, we here see clearly the Trinity. The expression, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah," is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The Jehovah mentioned in the clause, "... because Jehovah hath anointed me ...," refers to God the Father. Since the prophet was impersonating King Messiah, we see that the three persons of the Godhead appear in this passage—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Moses and the prophets were all Trinitarians. So were the Jews, until the first part of the second century of the Christian era. At that time the prophetic word which set forth the doctrine of the Holy Trinity was pressed upon the Jewish people with such telling effect by the ministers of the gospel that they turned from the normal, natural meaning of the words and accepted an interpretation of the same foreign to the plain sense and forced upon the Scriptures a teaching that Moses and the prophets never intended. From the second century and onward Israel has held to the unitarian belief. Not until the Hebrew people can be shown from their own Scriptures the true teaching of the Trinity, can they be given the gospel in its fullness as we see it set forth in the New Testament. For instance, Moses called Israel's attention to the fact that Jehovah was a Trinity. In her Great Confession we read, "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Gods is Jehovah a unity" (lit. trans., Deut. 6:4). This passage echoes the doctrine of the Trinity and at the same time asserts the unity of the divine personalities constituting the one true God. "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening *of the prison* to them that are bound" (Isa. 61:1).

According to this prediction Messiah, when He appears, will engage in a spiritual work of proclaiming the truth of God to the meek and lowly of earth. It is clear that He does not consume His time with those who are of themselves sufficient. On the contrary He devotes His entire ministry to those who realize their need.

After preaching the truth to the meek, He binds up "the broken-hearted." Who are the broken-hearted? Here the prophet thinks of unregenerated, lost sinners in terms of broken pottery, which is mended and made whole again. The Messiah, according to this prediction, will proclaim the gospel when He appears upon earth for the first time and those who accept Him, He will regenerate and save.

Those whom He saves, He liberates from bad habits and practices, for He proclaims "liberty to the captives, and the opening of *the prison* to them that are bound." Since the prophet is speaking of a spiritual ministry, it is clear that the liberating of these captives is a spiritual work.

Not only, according to this prediction, will the Messiah proclaim the truth of God to the meek, regenerate those who accept Him, and bring them out into the liberty wherewith He makes them free, but He announces ahead of time, "the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God." The question arises, What is meant by "the year of Jehovah's favor"? What is indicated by "the day of vengeance of our God?" When we compare this latter expression with related passages, we see that the day of vengeance of our God is none other than the Tribulation Period, which follows the present Christian Dispensation, and which is seven years in duration. During this future time, God will pour out His judgments upon the world, will purge all sinners out of it, and punish the world for its wickedness and sin. The prophet in his statement compared this period of seven years to one day. That which precedes it he thinks of as a year—a year of Jehovah's favor. If the period of seven years is thought of as a day, that which is represented by a year is approximately as much greater than the seven years as a year is greater than a day. We are logical in concluding that a like proportion exists between these periods which obtains between a year and a day. What period then is here represented by the year of Jehovah's favor? The answer comes immediately to the mind of everyone who knows the Scriptures that it can be nothing but the Christian Dispensation, which was introduced by our Lord at His first coming. As we have just seen from the first verse of this prophecy, Isaiah was impersonating Messiah when He would appear upon the earth the first time to begin His redemptive work.

The Christian Dispensation is undoubtedly the time during which God is extending His mercy, not only to Israel, but also to all the world. He is extending grace as He never has before and never will after this dispensation closes. Since this age is characterized by grace, it is spoken of in such terms.

From this passage we see that the Christian Dispensation was clearly foretold in the Old Testament. A glance at Isaiah 65:1 shows the same truth; for Paul, in Romans 10:19,20, quoted this passage and applied it to the believers of the present time.

As stated above, the day of vengeance of our God is the Tribulation Period, during which God pours out His judgments upon the world. Moses and the prophets unanimously speak of this Day of Wrath. It is usually called "the day of Jehovah." Isaiah speaks of it in 2:12ff. Zephaniah gives us a graphic account of it in chapter 1, verses 14-18, of his prophecy. Joel likewise speaks of it. A detailed statement of it is found in Revelation, chapters 6-19. At that time the Lord will purge out all the wicked from the earth and prepare for the coming Kingdom Age.

Messiah is anointed, not only to engage in His personal ministry and to foretell the day of Jehovah's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, but also to comfort those that mourn. The distress during the Tribulation will be on such a world-wide, global scale that suffering and misery will be seen in every nook and corner of the entire earth. But Messiah is anointed in order to bring the comfort and the relief that will be necessary.

Especially does Messiah say that He is appointed to comfort those that mourn in Zion and to give them a garland for ashes. The Jews in ancient times expressed their grief and sorrow, together with their deep contrition of heart and repentance of soul, by putting on sackcloth and ashes. In the Tribulation the power of the holy people will be broken (Dan. 12:7), and Israel will be trodden, figuratively speaking, down into the dust of the earth. She will, under those

circumstances, be in need of all the comfort and consolation that can be given to mortal men. Messiah will do this for His beloved ancient people. That there will be a genuine turning to God on the part of the nation that is alive at the end of the Tribulation is confirmed by various passages of Scripture. For instance, in Zechariah 12:10ff, we see a graphic description of the universal repentance and mourning that will grip the nation at this future date. The people of Israel must be given the truth of the gospel that they may see and understand what is the cause of all their distress, namely, their rejection of King Messiah. Hosea, in a most vivid manner, enacted the role of Messiah and declared that on account of her sin He would rend the nation as a lion and as a young lion. He would go away, returning to His place, and remain there until the nation confesses its offense and seeks Him earnestly. (See Hosea 5:14-6:3.) This acknowledgment of guilt is given in full in Isaiah 53:1-9. In order for us to understand the message and to comprehend the spirit of the passage, we must recognize that this is the confession that the nation will make in the year 1946-plus. My reason for stating the proposition this way is that I do not know how many more years there will be until Israel will see her error, will confess her sin, and will accept her long-rejected Messiah.

When convicted Israel makes this confession and pleads for Messiah to return, He will do so and will give her "the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Then all her troubles will be a thing of the past.

God is working in history in order to bring His Chosen People to the point that they "may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah." A tree must first be made good in order that it might bear good fruit. The heart of man is corrupt above all things and is desperately wicked. Man must be regenerated by the power of the Spirit of God in order that he might bear the fruit of the Spirit and thus please God. The Lord is pleading with all to come to Him, to accept His salvation, and to allow the Holy Spirit to regenerate the heart so that they can bear fruits of righteousness.

When Israel thus accepts her Lord and is genuinely saved, God will, for the first time in all the history of the human race, be glorified. It is true that He has been glorified in the case of individuals here and there. But the vision of this passage looks forward to the time when all peoples, nations, tribes, and languages will glorify and honor God. Israel of course will give them the truth and will lead them to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, the Hebrew Messiah.

Israel's Place in the Millennium

"And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations" (vs. 4). When we compare this passage of Scripture with others, we know that at the time here foreseen, the curse will be lifted from the earth. As we shall see in Isaiah 65:17, at that time God will create the heavens above anew and the earth anew. The necessity for such new creative activity is seen in the fact that in the Tribulation the heavens above and the earth beneath are all wrecked. In order that there may be a glorious era when the glory of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea, the Lord will have to do all of this repair work. Not only will He accomplish this but Israel, restored, will rebuild her own land. I have been throughout Palestine from Dan to Beersheba. I have seen the ruins of the ancient Canaanite civilization, as well as Israelite ruins. The land has been in a desolate and waste condition through the Christian centuries. What the Zionists are now building up will be thrown down in the Tribulation. Thus the whole land will have to be rebuilt in the Millennium. This prediction is made in the verse quoted at the beginning of this paragraph.

The Lord declared through Moses that, whereas Israel has been the tail of the nations through the centuries (Deut. 28:13), she is to be the head of the peoples in the great Millennial Kingdom. Her mission in the world is a spiritual one. She has never carried out her world-wide commission. At this future time she will engage in such activity. Of course, during that age there will be the necessity for the doing of menial chores and services. According to verse 5 of our quotation

"strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers." Thus the nations will serve the Jews at that time. They will do this gladly, because they will see the hand of the Lord in such a program.

But Israel, as stated above, has a divine mission. It was through her that all nations are to be blessed. Only a few Hebrews, comparatively speaking, have yielded their lives to the Lord and enabled Him to work in and through them to bring blessings to the world. When, however, the era here foretold arrives, all the Jews living at that time will become the priests and the ministers of our God. Israel at that time will no longer be interested in stocks and bonds, in science, manufacturing, trade and commerce, etc. Her calling is a heavenly, spiritual one. She will fulfill this mission perfectly. God called Israel His first-born. The first-born in the Hebrew family always had a double portion, together with the birthright. The Lord in Isaiah 61:7 therefore said: "Instead of your shame *ye shall have* double; and instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be unto them." God created the nation of Israel for a definite, specific, spiritual mission in the world. She was given advantages that no other nation ever enjoyed. In her own land in the Kingdom Age she will inherit double. Everlasting joy will be unto her. The reason for this is assigned in verse 8: "For I, Jehovah, love justice, I hate robbery with iniquity; and I will give them their recompense in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them." In all that God does, He is righteous and just. In order to be so with her and the nations, He will have to, in the setup of things, give her double.

Moreover, He will enter into an everlasting covenant with her. The Sinaitic Covenant was only provisional and temporary; but the one which He will make with her at the time foreseen will be an everlasting one. This covenant is promised in Jeremiah, chapter 31, and is alluded to in different places of the Scriptures.

When Israel is thus brought back into fellowship with the Lord, her seed will be known among the nations and all peoples will see and acknowledge that the Jews are the blessed of Jehovah. While they will be established in their own land, many of them will be out all over the earth as the ministers of the Word of God, giving out the truth to the peoples. In this fact will be the fulfillment of the promise which God made to Abraham: "And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

The Conversion of the Jews

"I will greatly rejoice in Jehovah, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decketh himself with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth its bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 61:10,11).

In these verses we see the prophet uses the personal pronouns, *I* and *me*. Do these refer to the Messiah, as the word *me* in verse 1 does? An examination of these verses shows that they cannot possibly have this connotation. This is seen by the fact that the impersonation which is found in verses 1-3 has melted away in a straight prediction, found in verses 4-9. Moreover, conclusive proof that the pronouns, *I* and *me*, in verse 10 do not refer to Messiah is seen in the fact that the speaker here, who refers to himself by these pronouns, is clothed with the garments of salvation and with the robe of righteousness. Now this language could not apply to the Messiah. It can refer only to someone who needs salvation and who needs to be robed in God's righteousness. In view of this fact, then, we conclude that the prophet was speaking of his own experience. He knew what it was to have his sins forgiven and to be regenerated and saved. This is seen in Isaiah, chapter 6, where we learn of his call to the prophetic ministry.

The garments of salvation and the robes of righteousness that are mentioned here are none other than imputed righteousness and the salvation which is granted by the Messiah. This same figure is carried out in other passages and is brought over into the New Testament.

After speaking of his own personal experience, the prophet declared, "For as the earth bringeth forth its bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." In this verse the prophet speaks of the nation of Israel and compares it to a garden or a field in which seed has been planted. This seed germinates and springs forth in this garden before all the nations. To what can this figurative language refer? When we read this in the light of such a passage as the parable of the sower (Matt., chap. 13), we can see very readily that the prophet had the same figure in mind. The Word of God is the seed. Here the prophet sees it sowed in all Israel. Moreover, he sees it germinating and springing forth, producing the plants of righteousness in Israel. The nations of earth look on and they see these budding plants of righteousness and praise throughout Israel. This passage assumes that the Word of God is sowed among these people and that it takes root in their hearts. Then it springs forth before all the nations.

Someone therefore must sow this seed in the field of Israel. Who will do it? The answer is: those people who know God and who see Israel's place in His plan and who desire to forward His work upon earth. May everyone who reads this message pray very earnestly to God and ask for divine assistance in order that he might see what he can do and by His strength do it. Let us broadcast this message to Israel now.

ISRAEL IN GOD'S FUTURE PLAN

Chapters 62:1—63:6

The passage 62:1-63:6, constitutes a literary unit in the Book of Isaiah. This sermon falls naturally into four divisions: 1. God's Intense Interest in Israel (verses 1-5); 2. Prayer for the Peace of Jerusalem (verses 6-9); 3. Jewish Evangelization Commanded, (verses 10-12); and 4. Messiah's Return to Deliver Israel (63:1-6).

God's Special Interest in Israel

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name. Thou shall also be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah; for Jehovah delighted in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa. 62:1-5).

According to verse 1 God declares that He will not hold His peace; neither will He take any rest until Zion's righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns. Since the prophet is representing God and speaks of Jerusalem's righteousness and salvation, it is clear that Jerusalem here, not only refers to the literal city in Palestine, but especially to the people who acknowledge that Jerusalem is their mother city.

God is especially interested in the city of Jerusalem and in her people. He therefore cannot cease thinking of and talking about this people. Beginning with Genesis 12 and running through the entire Old Testament, God is constantly speaking of Israel. He mentions other nations only as they come in touch with the Chosen People. In the four records of the Gospel we see Israel playing an important role. In Acts of the Apostles likewise we observe them, although in this latter book the church is occupying the central position on the historic stage. In the Jewish section of Romans, chapters 9-11, the Apostle shows that God has at the present time laid Israel aside because of her unbelief, and that, eventually by her returning to faith, she will return to Him and become the channel of world blessing. Occasional references to the Jews are found in the Epistles. In the seventh chapter of the Book of Revelation, we see 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are the ones conducting the world-wide revival, which occurs in the Tribulation. Thus God continually talks about Israel because He is especially interested in her.

The Lord is interested in the salvation of each individual. The call is, "Whosoever will, may come." Yet in the verse which we have under consideration, God says He can never take any rest until the sons and daughters of Jerusalem are all clothed with His righteousness and are the happy recipients of His salvation. Thus this is the national aspect of Israel's salvation, which is under consideration in this passage.

The Lord nowhere speaks of His being concerned in the salvation of any other nation as He does regarding Israel. Is He longing especially for the salvation of the Hebrew race, showing partiality? No one can accuse God of such feeling; for the Lord, through Peter, declared that He is no respecter of persons. Everyone in all the nations who fears God and works righteousness is acceptable to Him (Acts 10:35). While this is true, God is more interested in the salvation of the Jewish race as a people than He is in any other nation. To show this, I wish to use this little illustration: Every reader knows something about the game of tenpins. In this game there are ten pins placed in certain positions on the floor. They form the shape of a "V" with the apex of the triangle facing the player, whereas the base is on the opposite side. The game is

to strike the kingpin, placed at the apex of the triangle. If it is hit squarely, in falling it will strike the two in front; and they in falling knock the three in front of them. Then those three in falling knock over the four in the back row. Thus with one stroke it is possible to knock down all of the pins. The one who does that is of course the winner. God, as we see in the Scriptures, has placed Israel in the position of the kingpin. As we learn in Genesis 12:3, He plans to bless all nations in and through Abraham's seed. If it could be possible to convert genuinely every Chinaman in the world, this fact would not mean the conversion of the world. The same thing is true with reference to the people of India or of any other race. But when the Hebrew people are converted and all accept the Lord Jesus Christ nationally as their Messiah and Redeemer, saved Israel will lead all nations to a knowledge of Jesus Christ. The blessing therefore of the world is contingent upon the conversion of the Jewish race. Because of this fact God is especially interested in the salvation of Israel.

That she will be converted and be clothed with the righteousness of God is set forth in verse 2 of the quotation above. All nations will see Israel thus clothed in the righteousness of God and called by a new name which He alone will give.

At that time Israel, genuinely saved, will be like a crown of beauty or a royal diadem in the hand of her God. A crown or a diadem is a symbol of authority and power. Thus Israel converted will be the symbol of God's authority over all nations.

Jerusalem has lain in ruins at various times in the past. She has been termed "Forsaken." Moreover the land of Israel has been spoken of as being "Desolate." But the time which loomed before the prophet's mind in this passage is an era when Jerusalem will be called "Hephzi-bah" and the land of Palestine will be termed "Beulah." The former of these two Hebrew words, which have been transliterated, means *my delight is in her*. The latter one signifies *married*. When Israel thus accepts her Lord and is brought into fellowship with Him, there will be an intense desire for the land of the fathers in the heart of every Hebrew. This thought is expressed in the following words: "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." From the message of these first five verses we see that God is especially interested in Jerusalem and her sons.

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night: ye that are Jehovah's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Jehovah hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength. Surely I will no more give thy grain to be food for thine enemies; and foreigners shall not drink thy new wine, for which thou hast labored: but they that have garnered it shall eat it, and praise Jehovah; and they that have gathered it shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary" (Isa. 62:6-9).

According to verse 6 above God has placed watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem, that are praying night and day for her peace and glorification. Angels in the Book of Daniel are called watchers or watchmen. Men likewise are thus designated. Since God has put watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem, who do not hold their peace day nor night because of their praying for her, and since there are no men who are on those walls thus praying, one comes to the conclusion that these watchmen are none other than angels who, knowing the purposes of God concerning the Holy City for the future, are bringing those plans before the Almighty in earnest, sincere intercession.

Since God is interested in the future of Jerusalem and the Jewish people, and since the angels are likewise interested in them, the prophet called upon those whom he terms "Jehovah's remembrancers," those who really remind God of His promises, to pray constantly for the peace of Jerusalem. Thus, he used the very strongest language possible: "Take ye [people who know God and who know how to pray] no rest and give him no rest, until he establish, and until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. 62:6,7).

In these verses Isaiah was addressing all people who know God in a personal manner and who believe in prevailing intercession, urging them to pray constantly for the conversion of Israel and for the establishment of Jerusalem as the praise of the whole earth.

We may not understand the philosophy of prayer. We may realize that God knows that we have need of certain things before we speak to Him of them. Nevertheless He urges us to pray for the very things which He constantly gives us. The Lord will make Jerusalem the praise in the earth sometime in the future, but He invites us to co-operate with Him in believing, earnest prayer in order to hasten the time when He will be justified, in view of all of the facts, in making the Holy City the praise in the earth. It is therefore a great privilege conferred upon mortals that the Lord has urged us to remind Him of His promises concerning Jerusalem and the Jewish people.

In verses 8 and 9 the Lord shows why He urges praying people to remind Him of His plan to make Jerusalem the praise of the whole earth. When we read these verses, we see that the Lord has taken an oath that the time will come when Israel will produce her own crops without any fear that foreigners or enemies will come and devour the same. On the contrary, those who produce the crops will enjoy them. They will partake of the fatness of the land and realize that all blessings flow from the hand of God to them. They therefore will praise the Lord and magnify His name; Thus along with petitions are to go praise and thanksgiving.

Jewish Evangelization Commanded

"Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up an ensign for the peoples. Behold, Jehovah hath proclaimed unto the end of the earth. Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. And they shall call them The holy people; The redeemed of Jehovah: and thou shalt be called Sought out, A city not forsaken" (Isa. 62:10-12).

In verse 10 we see the exhortation, "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up an ensign for the peoples." How are we to understand this verse? Is it to be taken literally, or figuratively? When we look at the verses, as we have just done, preceding this one, we see that the prophet was speaking of a spiritual ministry of prayer concerning the fulfillment of His plans and purposes regarding Israel. Then, when we look at verses 11 and 12, we likewise note that a preaching ministry to Israel is enjoined by the prophet. In view of these facts one would think that verse 10 deals with some phase of a spiritual ministry. Is the prophet urging the construction of a literal highway up to Zion over which the people of Israel may journey? In ancient times when one monarch made the announcement that he intended to visit the sovereign of another country, the host king would prepare a special road over which his royal guest might travel—if there was none already made; that is, he would construct a highway beginning at his border and running to his capital in order that his guest might come in royal estate to visit him. Such a thing as this was done in 1898 when the ex-Kaiser of Germany made the announcement that he wished to visit Jerusalem. The Turkish authorities sent forth men from Jerusalem to construct a highway from Jaffa to Jerusalem. They also took out a large section of the ancient city wall at the Jaffa gate in order that the Kaiser might ride into the Holy City in royal estate. Was the prophet talking about something like this? It is hardly likely that he was. But, as noticed above, the verses preceding and following are speaking of a spiritual ministry. We may conclude that this verse likewise is discussing a spiritual ministry that must be performed in order that Israel's long-awaited King might appear in her midst. This interpretation is confirmed by verse 11. Here we see that God has sent a proclamation to the end of the earth—to those who believe in prayer and who believe that His plans and His purposes will be fulfilled to the very letter. Hence, the people of God who remind Him of His plans are urged to take a special message to the Jewish people, to the daughter of

Zion. The content of this message is this: "Behold, thy salvation [Zion's] cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him."

The special message that the praying people of the world are to deliver to the Jewish people is that their salvation is coming. This term is a rather broad and comprehensive one. The word appearing here in the original is derived from the one rendered Joshua; but in this context it has the suffix, *thy*, Jerusalem's Joshua is coming. The meaning of the word, Joshua, is Jehovah's deliverance or salvation. Praying people are therefore to say to the Jewish people that their Joshua is coming to them. This word, in shortened form, when translated from the Hebrew into the Greek and from the Greek into the English, is simply the word *Jesus*. Jesus then is Jerusalem's salvation. She will never have any deliverance until she calls for Him to return and accepts Him wholeheartedly.

But what coming is here foreseen? This question is answered by the next statement. Those bringing the message to Israel are to focus attention upon the coming of the Lord Jesus when He brings His reward and has His recompense with him. Clearly then it is the message of the second coming which we are to bring to the Jewish people. The Lord takes people as they are and not as they ought to be. When Jesus was talking with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, He approached her in a common practical manner by asking water of her. One word brought on another until He had an excellent opportunity to speak of the salvation which He had for her. Of course He did not lose His opportunity but made it good. He brought her to a saving knowledge of Himself. She was the occasion, on account of her telling her fellow townsmen of Jesus, of bringing many of them to a saving knowledge of the Messiah. The Jew is thinking in terms of deliverance from his present evil plight and a bright glowing future. When Israel is depressed as she is at the present day, we are to come with a message of His glorious return in power and splendor to take the world situation in hand and to deliver His faithful people. In our approaching the Jewish people in this manner, as the Lord has instructed us, we gain their attention, disarm them of prejudice, and have an excellent opportunity of speaking the truth to them concerning the future. When we have done that, the Lord will open up in the conversation an opportunity for us to present the facts concerning His first coming. We do not therefore have to force the issue and press the question concerning one's salvation unduly. We thus have an opportunity of leading up to this most important question of personal salvation. Of course our Lord taught us how to reach the Jew of the present day.

Not only are we to tell them of the glorious return of the Lord Jesus to take the world situation in hand, but we are to inform them that they will yet be called "The holy people, The redeemed of Jehovah; and thou shalt be called Sought out, A city not forsaken" (verse 12). From this quotation we learn that there is a marvelous and a glorious future before the Hebrew people. They are yet to be recognized as the holy people, the people of a holy God. They are to be the redeemed of Jehovah, and Jerusalem shall be called "Sought out, A city not forsaken." There is no wonder then that the Psalmist declared that wonderful things are spoken of thee, "O city of God" (Ps. 87:3).

Messiah's Coming to Deliver Converted Israel

When the complete and full message regarding Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, is thus presented to the Jewish people in the manner here enjoined and in the spirit of love, God's word will not return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that whereunto He has sent it; namely, to bring back His people to Himself. When the truth has thus been sown in their hearts, Israel of this future day will acknowledge the national sin—as we see in such passages as Isaiah 53:1-9—and will plead for the Messiah to return. This fact is clearly set forth in Hosea 5:15: "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly." When Messiah came the first time, both Ephraim and Judah committed the heinous crime against Him of rejecting Him. He has gone away and returned to His own place, where He has been ever since. Never will He return to this earth to deliver His ancient people

until they acknowledge their offence and seek His face earnestly. According to this passage they will do this very thing in their tribulation, in the time of Jacob's trouble—the Great Tribulation. When they thus make the confession of their national sin and plead with Him to return, He will do so. This coming is set forth graphically by the prophet in 63:1-6. Isaiah who was in Jerusalem was carried forward to the conclusion of the Great Tribulation; and, as he was viewing the events of the end time, he looked from his place to Edom and saw a stranger coming toward the Holy City from Bozrah in Edom. He recognized instantly that this one was glorious in His apparel and that He was marching in the greatness of His strength. He therefore asked the question, "Who is this one?"

The reply coming from the approaching stranger was this: "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." There is but one who speaks in righteousness and who is mighty to save, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. So we can see that this is a vision of His descending from heaven to Edom, where doubtless many Jews will be who flee from the persecution of the anti-Christ. They will be in dire straits at that time and will be praying for their deliverance. He will therefore come to them in their distress.

But the prophet saw Him red in His apparel and His garments like the one who treads in the winepress. He therefore asked this approaching stranger, Israel's Redeemer, why was His raiment thus besprinkled. The answer came back that He had trodden the winepress of the wrath of God alone because there was no one to assist. He came in indignation and in wrath against His inveterate enemies and delivered His people from the clutches of the evil one.

According to verse 4 the day of vengeance was in Messiah's heart and the year of His redeemed had come. He therefore came forth from heaven in power and great glory executing vengeance upon all of the enemies of Israel.

According to verse 5 He looked about to see whether or not there was any one who was present to help Him. On finding no one, He took the world situation into His own hand and by His omnipotency brought salvation to the faithful remnant that was awaiting His appearance. He therefore trod down the people in His anger and made them drunk in His wrath and poured out their lifeblood upon the earth. Such a passage as this one should be read in the light of such scriptures as the nineteenth chapter of Revelation.

Our Lord when He was here upon earth the first time manifested the gentle qualities of love, peace, kindness, and grace. When He comes in fulfillment of this prediction, He will show forth His lion qualities; for He will destroy all His enemies and will deliver His people who will be blessed by Him forever and ever.

A SECOND VERSION OF ISRAEL'S CONFESSION OF HER NATIONAL SIN

63:7-64:12

The primary statement of the confession of the national sin which the Hebrew people will make in the year 1946-plus X (we do not know the year now) is found in Isaiah 53:1-9. That the people of Israel will make this confession was foretold by Moses in Leviticus 26:39,40. It was likewise made known by Hosea in 5:14—6:3.

In this second version of her confession, the penitent remnant of Israel will enter into a fuller detailed statement. It is true that the deep theological meaning that is set forth in chapter 53:1-9 is not brought out in this second version of it, which is found in Isaiah 63:7—64:12. But there are many statements made that will throw new light on this future penitential acknowledgment of the age long sin.

This block of scripture naturally falls into two sections: *I. A Retrospect (Isa. 63:7—14); II. The Penitential Confession and Prayer (63:15-64:12).*

A Retrospective

The prophet looked forward by the power of the Spirit to the time when the penitent remnant of Israel will make this confession and identified himself with it. In his doing this, he looked back over the centuries from this future time to the period of Israel's enslavement in Egypt and the Lord's delivering her from her evil case.

According to verse 7 the prophet declares, as he leads the nation in confession and prayer, that he will make mention of the loving-kindnesses of Jehovah, and His praises, according to the favors bestowed upon the nation and His great goodness to the house of Israel, all of which blessings are the pure result of the mercies and of the loving-kindness of the Lord. Thus there is no merit claimed for the nation. Everything is ascribed to the pure unadulterated mercy and grace of God.

The prophet does not speak of the terrible condition of slavery into which the nation had been plunged by the treachery of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. In a most dramatic manner he represents the Lord as looking down upon His Chosen People and saying: "Surely, they are my people, children that will not deal falsely; so he was their Saviour." Here the Lord is represented as looking with kindness upon them and of looking only at their excellent qualities and at the same time overlooking their bad ones. This type of language is of course anthropomorphic—the adaptation of divine thought to human understanding.

In verse 8 Jehovah is represented as becoming the Saviour of the Hebrew people. In verse 9 the prophet speaks of "the angel of his presence," who delivered Israel from her servitude. Then in verse 10 he speaks of the Holy Spirit. These three verses therefore present the Holy Trinity. Obviously the one who became Israel's Saviour, mentioned in verse 8, is none other than God the Father. The "angel of his presence," named in verse 9, is none other than the one who in early books of the Old Testament is called "the angel of Jehovah," the Lord Jesus Christ in His prenatal state. This same Divine Being is spoken of in Deuteronomy 4:37 as "his presence" who brought Israel out of Egypt. (For a full discussion of the "angel of Jehovah" see my volume, *Messiah: His Nature and Person*; and for the Old Testament representation of the Holy Trinity see my book, *The God of Israel*.)

According to verse 9—"In all their affliction he was afflicted"—God the Father is afflicted in the affliction of His people. Here again we have an anthropomorphic expression. Although the language is of this type, it expresses the idea that God is in full sympathy with His people in their sufferings. Any true parent suffers when his child is in distress.

According to verse 9 this angel of God's face—the very reflection of God and His holiness are seen in the face of this angel—redeemed Israel and bore her during the days of old as she was passing through the wilderness. Notwithstanding the many manifestations of God's mercy, grace, and power in His mighty acts which He wrought in her behalf in bringing her out of the house of bondage, she rebelled against the Holy Spirit and grieved Him—until He, the Spirit, turned against them and fought against them. The full account of the Spirit's displeasure and warfare with the disobedient ones is set forth especially in the Book of Numbers.

Verse 11 presents some difficulty. In the text we have the following language: "Then he remembered the days of old, Moses *and* his people, *saying*, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit in the midst of them?" The marginal rendering of the first part of this verse as it appears in the Revised Version is as follows: "Then his people remembered the ancient days of Moses ..." In the light of the entire context I am persuaded that the marginal rendering is to be preferred. Of course both renderings are grammatical, but the one that accords with the facts of the context is always to be chosen and to be understood as the true meaning of the original inspired writer. After the Holy Spirit, whom the nation grieved, had fought against it, the people looked back over this time when they were under the displeasure of God and asked several questions. First they wanted to know where was He who had brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock; that is, where was this "angel of Jehovah's presence," the Lord Jesus Christ in His prenatal state, who had brought them so very miraculously out of their distress and had led them through the Red Sea, which opened up before them, in order that they might pass through safely. Their second question was: "Where is he that put his Holy Spirit in the midst of them?" This query doubtless referred to God the Father, who sent the Spirit to assist them in their being delivered. The next question is: Where is He "that caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses?" This query also doubtless refers to God the Father, who sent His "glorious arm," the Lord Jesus Christ, to go at the right hand of Moses. In the next place they asked where was He who had "divided the waters before them, to make himself an everlasting name." Though we may not be dogmatic in answering this question, it is quite likely that it refers either to God the Father, or the Lord Jesus, the Son. It is quite probable that the one concerning whom the query of verse 13 is made is the Lord Jesus, "the angel of Jehovah," who led them through the depths to the opposite shore and to safety. Verse 14, however, it is quite certain, has reference to none other than the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who "caused them to rest," when they passed over the Jordan into the Holy Land. Just as Palestinian shepherds lead their flocks and herds, after they have grazed sufficiently, to a quiet shady place beside some brook, thus the Lord led His flock into the Promised Land.

After Israel had thus been delivered from all her enemies and had been brought into the land, she corrupted herself and dealt treacherously with the Lord. The wars of the conquest of Palestine after Joshua led the nation into it continued for six years. They were long and bloody conflicts. Of course this was all due to the fact that Israel was not faithful to her God. Following the time of Joshua were the days of the Judges, which were indeed turbulent. Thus from the standpoint of her early residence in Canaan, when she was suffering and fighting for her existence, the people looked backward to the time of the Exodus when God uncovered His mighty arm, by terrible deeds delivered His people from their bondage in Egypt, and settled them in the land. Thus they asked where was the God who became their Saviour, where was "the angel of his presence" who went at the right hand of Moses and delivered them, and where was the "Holy Spirit" who caused them to rest in the land? They evidently felt that they were forsaken of God.

History repeats itself, so we are told. Like the people of Israel of old who thus asked the questions discussed above when they were in distress and saw no way out of their difficulties, so will the remnant of Israel in the end time, when she is overwhelmed by the evils of that future period of wrath, begin to meditate upon and to ask vital questions similar to those which their ancestors propounded in their difficulty. They, too, will be overcome by the situation in which they find

themselves, will be unable to see a way out—humanly speaking—and will begin to turn their faces toward God in quest of deliverance.

The Confession and Penitential Prayer

Beginning with verse 15, we have a record of Israel's prayer and confession of her national sin. Thus the convicted remnant will pray: "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where are thy zeal and thy mighty acts? the yearning of thy heart and thy compassions are restrained toward me" (Isa. 63:15). The prophet is still thinking of himself as being in the midst of the Tribulation with Israel and praying in her behalf. He prays just as anyone who leads a public gathering in intercession, for he uses the personal pronoun, *me*, and at other times he uses the plural, *us*. In his petition he looks up to heaven and calls upon the Lord to look down from His position of glory and of holiness and to act in behalf of the nation. When we compare this petition (vs. 15) with Psalm 80:1f, we see a like situation. In this latter chapter, however, the Shepherd of Israel, the Messiah of the nation, is there addressed. Since both passages are a record of the petitions that will be offered by the penitent remnant of the nation at the end of the Tribulation, it is quite obvious that the one here addressed is the same as the one to whom the psalmist spoke.

According to Isaiah 63:16 the prophet together with Israel will recognize God as Father, even though Abraham and Isaac and the ancestors of the Jewish race are represented here as not recognizing the Israel of this future day. The nation as a group has not walked in the steps of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Such is the significance of the statement found in verse 16. Not only will the remnant recognize God as Father, but also as Redeemer, whose eternal existence is affirmed in the sentence, "... our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name." Although the word, Father, here is used, it is not necessary that we understand it as referring to God the Father; because God the Son is in Isaiah 9:6 called "the everlasting Father"— "... and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." To converted Israel the Lord Jesus Christ will be all that these names imply.

The prophet, still leading the nation in prayer in his vision (Isa. 63:17), asks the question: "O Jehovah, why dost thou make us to err from thy ways, and hardenest our heart from thy fear?" Whenever men do not want the truth but prefer unrighteousness and their own ways, the Lord always causes them to miss the way. This is seen in Isaiah 66:3,4 and in many other places in the Scriptures. Pharaoh hardened his heart. When he took that attitude, the Lord hardened his heart. The result of their own willfulness and stubbornness and of the Lord's judicial hardening was that Israel's heart was hardened. The same principles are operative today and always.

In the latter part of verse 17 is this special petition: "Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance." The one who is here addressed as Father is urged to return for His servants' sake. One cannot return to a place where he has never been. This petition assumes that this one who is recognized as Father has been here on a former occasion. They therefore know these facts and pray that He might return. Thus we see in this petition reflected the two comings of the one Messiah, separated by the interval during which He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

In verses 18 and 19 of this chapter the prophet acknowledges that the Jewish people possessed the Promised Land only for a short while and that their adversaries have trodden down the sanctuary of the Lord. They therefore have been as those over whom God never bore rule. In other words, in this part of the petition, the prophet, looking back over the weary waste of the centuries—is describing Israel's scattered condition and the desolate condition of the land while she is dispersed among the nations.

In Isaiah 64:1 is the petition: "Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might quake at thy presence." This language is probably an echo of the historic account of the Lord's descending to Mount Sinai when He delivered His law to Israel. In continuing this petition (vs. 2) the prophet thinks of the physical phenomena which will attend the Lord's descent from heaven to earth in terms of the kindling of brushwood under a

kettle, the waters of which boil. He beseeches the Lord to make known His divine power (His name) to His adversaries in order that the nations of earth may tremble at His presence. From many passages of scripture we know that the peoples of the world will be terrified when the Lord returns.

In verse 3 the prophet still continues the correspondence between the phenomena, which occurred when the Lord came down on Mount Sinai with what will take place when He does return.

From verse 4 we learn that men have never thought of, have never conceived of, a personal God beside Jehovah who "worketh for him that waiteth for him." There is evidence of the existence of God throughout all nature. The proof is sufficient to convince any honest, conscientious mind of the existence of the Almighty. But the human mind has never conceived of any God like Jehovah our Lord, who works for and who intervenes in the affairs of those who wait for Him and who trust Him.

Sometimes it is very hard for us to take our stand upon the naked, unvarnished Word of God and wait for Him to fulfill His precious promises. Such waiting is hard on the flesh. Only by faith can one take His stand upon the promises and endure the trials and the difficulties incident to life. The Old Testament saints were urged constantly by the prophets and the psalmists to wait for Jehovah. Whenever we see the expression, wait for Jehovah, we may be certain that this command was simply an exhortation to wait for the personal appearance of God in the person of Messiah upon the earth.

There is a wonderful promise contained in verse 5: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways ..." When the Lord tries a person's faith and such a one has not doubted, in the proper time the Lord will meet him and will solve his problems for him. The Lord will not just simply work in behalf of all and meet anyone regardless of conditions. Those who may take hold of this promise are the ones who rejoice, who work righteousness, and who remember God in His ways. Of course Isaiah 64:5 refers to Israel, the penitent remnant in the end time; but we know that, when we compare this scripture with others, this verse contains a general principle of God's dealings with His people.

According to the latter part of this verse, the remnant of Israel will acknowledge that God has been wrathful at it because it has sinned. Moreover, the people will acknowledge that they have been in their sins of a long time and will ask the question: "Shall we be saved?"—under such conditions. God is holy. He cannot tolerate sin and wickedness in His people. If they go into sin and persist therein, He can do but one thing—punish them with the hope of their returning to Him. Israel has sinned throughout her entire career, as we see by reading the Law and the Prophets.

But she has been in her sins of a long time. Let us bear in mind that this is the position of the faithful remnant. In the end of the Tribulation those convicted sinners will look back over the past centuries and will admit that they have been alienated from God and have been in their sins for a long time. In view of the history of the nation, as set forth in the New Testament and in post-biblical times, we are certain that this long time is none other than the Christian Dispensation, during which Israel has been alienated from God.

They will ask the question: "And shall we be saved?" The answer to this query is a most positive affirmation. Anyone and everyone who repents of his sins, returns to God, and accepts the redemption which Messiah purchased for him nineteen hundred years ago can be saved. Whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely.

At this future time the people of Israel will have been divested of all feeling of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency. Instead they will be very humble and will see themselves in the white light of God's holiness. Thus they will admit that they are in His sight as an unclean thing and that all of their righteousnesses are as a polluted garment. Moreover they will state that they do fade as a leaf and that their iniquities, like the wind, take them away.

According to verse 7 they will look back over their immediate past and will acknowledge that there is no one who has been calling upon God's name, who has stirred up himself to take hold of the Lord during this period when He has hid His face from the nation and has consumed them by means of their iniquities. In our looking at this language, we must remember that there are two types of statements: those used in the absolute sense of the term and those employed relatively. In view of all the facts I am convinced that this is relative language. No one of such gigantic proportions, spiritually speaking, as Moses will be found in Israel to stir himself up, to throw himself into the breach as did the great Lawgiver and to intercede for the nation.

But when the people of Israel thus pray, they will make the following penitential confession: "But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." God is the sovereign Lord who is ruling and overruling throughout the entire universe as well as among men. He is directing the course of history. Men are free to exercise their own choices. Nevertheless, the Lord is the potter and men are the clay. Israel will learn this great truth and will desire to be yielded to God in order that He might make her and shape her according to His will. When she reaches this point and thus prays for His return, He will do so.

According to verses 9 the nation will plead that the Lord will no longer be angry with her, but will recognize the fact that they are the people of God, the ones through whom He promised Abraham to bless the entire world.

In verses 10-12 we see a picture of the desolations that will be wrought in Palestine during the Tribulation. Thus penitent Israel will call the Lord's attention to this wreckage and plead with Him to come and deliver her. This language is similar to that found in Psalm 74.

May we, my dear Christian friend and reader, have the same yielded spirit that is mentioned in verse 8 in order that God may use us to the fullest: "But now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

"Thou the grace of life supplying,
Thou the crown of life wilt give;
Dead to sin, and daily dying,
'Life of life!' in thee we live."

ISAIAH'S VIEWING THE FUTURE

Chapter 65

There are chapters in the Scriptures which are fundamental for an understanding of the unfolding of the ages. Isaiah, chapter 65, is one of these. In this passage the prophet was carried forward by the Spirit of God (II Peter 1:21) and was given a clear picture of the present Christian Dispensation, of the Tribulation—a period of seven years, during which God will pour out His judgments upon the world—and of the great Kingdom Age, which will be ushered in by the return of our Lord to take the reins of government into His own strong hands and to reign upon the earth for a thousand years.

The Christian Dispensation

65 "I am inquired of by them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. 2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts; 3 a people that provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens, and burning incense upon bricks; 4 that sit among the graves, and lodge in the secret places; that eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; 5 that say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day. 6 Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, yea, I will recompense into their bosom, 7 your own iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith Jehovah, that have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I first measure their work into their bosom" (Isa. 65:1-7).

The Church

In verse 1 of this passage the church of Jesus Christ is seen and foretold. Here the prophet, speaking for God, declares that He is inquired of by them who had not previously sought after Him, and that He is found by them that had not inquired for Him. Moreover, the prophet, still speaking for Jehovah, declared, "I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." The prophet sees people other than Jews inquiring for and seeking after God. The Lord is represented here as turning to them and letting them know that He is present, and that they can come to Him and accept Him. These thus coming to Him are a nation upon which God's name had not been called. Israel was the nation upon whom God's name had been called. Hence the Lord constantly spoke of Himself as "the God of Israel," and of Israel as His chosen people. But in this vision the prophet sees those from other nations coming to the Lord and being received by Him.

Who are they? There is but one answer: the believers from all nations who now accept the Lord and who constitute "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession ..." (I Pet. 2:9). That I am correct in thus interpreting this passage is evident from the fact that the Apostle Paul quoted it in Romans 10:20 and applied it to the believers of the present age. Moses likewise saw the believers of this age and spoke of them in Deuteronomy 32:21, which passage is likewise quoted by Paul in Romans 10:19 and applied to the church. From these facts it is clear that the prophets of the Old Testament did see the Christian Dispensation and the church of Jesus Christ. This fact is further confirmed by an examination of I Peter 1:11,12. In this passage the Apostle declared that the prophets who spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow did speak of the grace that is brought unto us by the Lord Jesus and that is announced by those who proclaim the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter declared in Acts 3:24, in his speaking of the Christian Dispensation and the gospel message, that the prophets spoke of these days. But Ephesians 3:1-6 has been interpreted as meaning that the church was not revealed to the Old Testament prophets. But a careful reading

of verses 5 and 6, for instance, shows that, instead of Paul's stating that it was not known, he actually said that it had been made known by the prophets. Concerning this mystery of Christ he declared that it "... was not made known unto the sons of men as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (Eph. 3:5). Paul stated that this mystery had been made known to the prophets but not with the same clarity and fullness of details as it has now been revealed to the prophets and Apostles of the New Testament Era. All the facts, therefore, show that the Christian Dispensation and the church were made known in Old Testament times.

Israel In Her Rejection

In Isaiah 65:2-7 we have a picture of Israel during the present dispensation as she is out of favor with God. In verse 2-5 the prophet has given us the reason why God turned from His ancient people and is giving a special invitation to those of other nations who will come and partake of His blessings. Unfortunately the Jewish people developed a spirit of self-righteousness and superiority, thinking themselves better than the nations. At the same time Israel developed many practices, as we see in these verses, contrary to the will of God. Of course, while she is in this condition, she cannot be acceptable to God.

In verses 6-7 the prophet reminded Israel that God will not always keep silent, but will recompense into her bosom her iniquities and those of the fathers. He has punished His chosen people at various times. They have suffered as no other nation has. Their troubles are not over. In fact their real distress has never broken forth against them, as it will in the Tribulation. Throughout the Prophets appear many pictures of the Tribulation and its devastating judgments. For instance, in Isaiah 2:12-4:1 is a very vivid portrayal of the terrors of that day. Again, these are seen in Isaiah 24:1-20.

The Tribulation

"8 Thus saith Jehovah, as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants sake, that I may not destroy them all. 9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains; and my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. 10 And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me. 11 But ye that forsake Jehovah, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for Fortune, and that fill up mingled wine unto Destiny; 12 I will destine you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but ye did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not.

13 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be put to shame; 14 behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall wail for vexation of spirit. 15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; and the Lord Jehovah will slay thee; and he will call his servants by another name: 16 so that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes" (Isa. 65:8-16).

Though Israel has been rejected by the Lord during the present dispensation, her being cast off is not complete; neither is it permanent. His eye still watches over His people; and, though they have suffered untold persecution, He has prevented their being destroyed. Israel will survive the destruction of all the nations (Jer. 30:11). In Isaiah 65:8,9 God sets forth His protection of the nation as such. In Palestine the grapevines are not trained to grow upon any kind of lattice-

work or wires, but lie flat on the ground. Thus the vines themselves, as they lie on the ground after the annual growth has been pruned away, look like rods four or five feet long lying in rows. In the spring these vines are lifted and rocks are placed under them to hold them off the ground. But the new year's growth comes out and spreads in both directions. At the time of the full foliage and of the harvest the vines almost meet in the middle between the rows. The prophet was familiar with such scenes. He pictured two men walking along between the rows of vines. One is represented as about to put his foot upon a cluster, or bunch, of grapes. The other quickly shouts for him not to destroy the entire bunch, though some of the grapes are bad; because a blessing is in it. He thus used this illustration to indicate God's preservation of the nation when she is dispersed among the Gentiles. For the sake of the good ones, the Lord has preserved the nation and has not allowed any hostile power to destroy His people. The reason for His thus protecting them is that "I [Jehovah] will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains ..." (vs. 9). There has always been a remnant of the nation that has thirsted after God and desired to do His will. There is a remnant according to the election of grace at the present time. These of course learn the truth, accept it, and receive Jesus Christ as Lord, Saviour, and Messiah. By so doing they become members of His body and will be translated, if they are still alive, at the time of the rapture. At the same time there is a portion of the nation that will enter the Tribulation and that will constitute the faithful remnant. They will not have at that time seen the full light of the truth. But their hearts will be yearning for God. During the Tribulation the truth will be given them and at the end of that time of sorrowing all constituting this remnant will see the truth, and accept Him. Then He will come, delivering them from all their sorrows. That portion, then, constitutes those who will inherit His mountain.

In verse 10 the Lord spoke of this same faithful remnant that will have flocks of sheep in the plains of Sharon and in the valley of Achor. While the prophet mentioned these two places, it is not to be assumed that these are the only localities where they will live. The Lord gave all the land extending from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates to Abraham and his seed forever. When this promise is made good, the curse will be lifted, the desert will blossom as the rose, and Israel will live in her own land.

In verses 11 and 12 the prophet threw out a warning against all of those in Israel who turn aside from the truth and who worship idols. The gods, Fortune and Destiny, are mentioned, and those worshiping them are warned of the fate awaiting them. There is a play on words in the following clause, "... that fill up mingled wine unto Destiny; I will destine you to the sword." Those who depart from Jehovah will thus be destined to the judgments of war and pestilences which will come upon the earth at that time.

That idolatry will spread like a prairie fire over the earth is seen from various statements of the prophets. The Apostle John (Rev. 9:20,21) likewise foretold that all races will revert to idolatry. Isaiah the prophet saw the Jews thus engaging in idolatry at the time of the Tribulation and warned them against the impending judgments. The reason that the stroke of judgment will be so very severe is stated in the latter part of verse 12: "... because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but ye did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not." These words are a reference to the evangelization program of Israel. God saves people by faith. Faith comes by hearing. Hearing must be the result of the proclamation of the truth. God thus calls people by the preaching of the gospel. Here the prophet looks forward to the time of the Tribulation and sees that Israel will have been evangelized completely in the Tribulation. The apostate portion of the nation will not heed the message. On the contrary, they will choose their own ways and the judgment of God will have to fall upon them. It is for us who have the truth to give it to Israel now so that, after the church is raptured, those honest hearts in which we sow the word now may yield to the truth, accept the Lord Jesus Christ, and go forth in the power of the Spirit of God, proclaiming the glad message to their brethren according to the flesh, as well as to the Gentile world. (See Rev. 7:7.)

In verses 13 and 14 the situation, both of God's faithful servants in Israel and of the apostate portion of the nation, is set forth. The judgments of Almighty God will fall thick and fast upon the apostates. But those of the faithful remnant who are seeking after God will be protected, and their needs will be provided for miraculously. This fact is set forth in Isaiah 33:13-16. The protection of the faithful remnant is likewise set forth in Revelation 12:1-17. The woman in this instance is a symbol of the faithful remnant which flees to the place that God has prepared for her, and which is protected at that time.

At the conclusion of the Tribulation, after the wicked in Israel have been slain, a new order will be introduced. This fact is set forth in verses 15 and 16. The apostates who die under the powerful judgments of the Tribulation will leave their names for a memory to those who survive as the ones upon whom the curse of God fell. The new order mentioned in these verses involve the introduction of a new political set-up, the inauguration of a new spiritual regime, and the institution of a new ethical and moral world. These facts are only hinted at in this chapter, but may be seen from parallel and related passages.

Every vestige of the present order and all things connected with it will be hidden or covered. This is seen in the last clauses of verse 16. During the Tribulation, as we learn from many passages, not only the heavenly bodies will be wrecked; but this earth likewise will become a desolation and a waste, the result of the terrific judgments of the Tribulation. But when the new order is introduced, all the wreckage and everything connected with the present age will be covered up and hidden. There will therefore be nothing to remind anyone of the present time, during which sin and Satan reign all but universally.

The Millennial Age

"17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. 18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. 19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and there shall be heard in her no more the voice of weeping and the voice of crying. 20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed. 21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for calamity; for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. 24 And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah" (Isa. 65:17-25).

The reason that the wreckage will be covered and hidden, as we have just seen, is given to us in verse 17 in the following words: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." This sentence, introduced by the conjunction "for," is an explanation of why the wreckage will be hidden. At the beginning of the Millennial Age, our Lord, the creator of all things, will create the heavens anew. A careful study of Isaiah, chapter 34, and II Peter, chapter 3, shows us that at the end of the Tribulation the heavenly bodies are dissolved and pass away with fervent heat. Though the earth is burned by the terrific heat coming from the great heavenly conflagrations and from the explosions that will be occasioned upon earth, yet the earth is not destroyed in the sense of

being annihilated; but it is greatly damaged. Life upon earth could not continue very long under the conditions which will result from the Tribulation. In order that there may be a glorious reign of righteousness, the Lord will have to create new heavenly bodies to take the place of those that are dissolved. He likewise will create new materials upon earth which will cover up the wreckage, and which will make possible that wonderful era when the glory of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea.

In verse 18 the prophet foretold that the Lord will create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people, the Jewish nation, a joy. What Jerusalem is this? The answer is found in verse 19, which tells us that in this Jerusalem which is created anew there will never again be heard the voice of weeping and the voice of crying. Obviously, then, this Jerusalem which will be created anew is the one in which there has been weeping and crying. But after it is created anew, there will nevermore be any sorrow or sadness. Instantly we know then that this Jerusalem is the Jerusalem in the land of Palestine, which has undergone so very many terrific sieges during its long, checkered history.

When the Lord has thus created the heavens above anew and the earth anew and Jerusalem a joy in the whole earth, the curse will be lifted. There will nevermore, according to verse 20, be babies dying in infancy. There will of course be no disease, no sickness. All children will be allowed to live to be one hundred years of age. During this time they must accept the grace of God and the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ which was purchased on Calvary nineteen hundred years ago. Those who do not accept Christ before their one hundredth birthday will, when that day is reached, fall under the curse and will be blotted out of the land of the living—"and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed." From verse 21 we see that men will build houses and live in them; that they will plant vineyards and orchards and eat the fruit of them. The earth at that time will yield its full strength and increase.

There will be no depression, no bank failures, or anything of that nature. The man who builds a house will have the opportunity of living in it. The one who plants an orchard or grove will live to enjoy the fruit of his labors. Longevity will be restored to the human family, "... for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands."

There will be no earthquakes, no calamities, no wars, or anything of that nature to destroy the crops and the property of the people who live upon the earth. This is seen from verse 23. At that time the Lord will anticipate the prayers and the petitions of His people and will have the answer on the way before they utter their requests. Thus all of their needs will be anticipated and will be provided for by the Lord. That is not the order of today; for, according to Luke 18:1f, the disciples of the Lord Jesus are to pray always and not to faint. If we are confident that a certain thing is within the will of God, we are to continue to bring that matter before the Lord until He answers it.

The prophecy finally concludes with the account of the lifting of the curse from the animal creation. The wolf and the lamb at that time will feed together and the lion will have his nature changed, for at that time he will eat straw like the ox. But the serpent will still go upon its belly. It seems from the Genesis account that he walked upright; but, since he was the one whom Satan used as a cat's-paw, he has been going upon his belly and will continue to do so even during that glorious era of our Lord's thousand-year reign.

Chapter 66

MATTERS OF THE END TIME—BUILDING OF THE TRIBULATION TEMPLE, INAUGURATION OF JEWISH SACRIFICES, AND THE MILLENNIUM

Isaiah, chapter 66, contains the last sermon in this book of prophecy. It deals with matters of the end time—the building of the Tribulation Temple, the inauguration of Jewish sacrifices, and the Millennium.

Rebuilding the Jewish Temple

"66 Thus saith Jehovah, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest? 2 For all these things hath my hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. 3 He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that breaketh a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, *as he that offereth swine's blood*; he that burneth frankincense, as he that blesseth an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations: 4 I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not" (66:1-4).

Isaiah was carried forward to the end of the age and saw his brethren reconstructing the Jewish Temple in the city of Jerusalem. He therefore, speaking for God, asked them what type of house they were proposing to build to Him, seeing that He is the one who created all things. It is impossible for any building constructed by man to house the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Creator.

The futility of the worship that will be rendered there is set forth in verse 3. Here we learn that those who sacrifice oxen under the prevailing conditions will be just as guilty as if they committed murder, and that the sacrifice of a lamb will be no more acceptable to God than a dog whose neck might be broken and offered in sacrifice. Their oblations will not be acceptable any more than if they offered a sacrifice of swine's blood. Their frankincense will not be pleasing to God anymore than it would be if it were offered to an idol. Thus the futility of this future worship is set forth very vividly, graphically, and without any doubt.

When men will not have God's ways and plans and purposes, but choose the things wherein they delight, the Lord likewise chooses their delusions and confirms them in their error. This is seen in the latter part of verse 3 and in verse 4. Truth rejected becomes enigmatical to those who refuse to do the will of God. On the other hand, if any man wills to do the will of God, he will know of the teaching of Messiah—whether from men or from God (John 7:17). The prophets constantly warned people against rejecting the light which God offers to them. On this point study carefully Jeremiah 6:16-21; 13:15-17; Ezekiel 14:1-5.

God will send delusions to Israel, when she rejects the light as set forth in verse 4. He calls to the nation, but it refuses to answer. He speaks to it, but it refuses to hear. How does God speak to people today? The answer is that it is through His messengers who proclaim His Word faithfully. Since this passage assumes that God has taught them and they have rejected the light, it is evident that the prophet foresaw as an accomplished fact the great evangelistic campaign to give Israel the truth. She must be given the opportunity to accept or reject the Word of God as set forth in her own Scriptures and in those of the New Testament. But here it is foretold that she, temporarily, will not heed. The worship therefore which she sets up, centering in the rebuilt Temple at Jerusalem, will not be acceptable. But on account of her having

rejected the light given to her in the truth of the gospel, she will be confirmed in error and will do things contrary to the will of God.

That the Temple of Jehovah will be rebuilt in Jerusalem and will be standing in the end time is assumed in Psalm 74, Matthew 24:15f, II Thessalonians, chapter 2, and Revelation, chapter 11. The reader should study these passages in their connection in order to see the full force of these predictions.

A Word of Encouragement to the Remnant

"5 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye that tremble at his word: Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name's sake, have said, Let Jehovah be glorified, that we may see your joy; but it is they that shall be put to shame. 6 A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies" (vss. 5, 6).

Israel will be divided into two sections: That portion which hears the Word and receives it, the minority; and the larger part of the nation which rejects the message. Those refusing the message make fun of and ridicule those who, having accepted the Scriptures as the divine revelation, tremble at the Word of Jehovah. The Lord therefore thus encourages those who do accept it: Pay no attention, exhorted the prophet, to those who reject it; for it is they—the ones refusing it—who will be put to shame when there is "a voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompense to his enemies." This voice of Jehovah mentioned here is nothing other than the voice of Messiah, when He shouts aloud upon His return as He goes forth against His enemies.

The Tribulation

"7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. 8 Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? shall a nation be brought forth at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. 9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith Jehovah: shall I that cause to bring forth shut *the womb*? saith thy God" (vss. 7-9).

The prophet compared the troubles and disasters of the Tribulation to the pain connected with child birth. Frequently the psalmists used this comparison. Isaiah clearly employed it with this signification in our passage. Jeremiah likewise used the illustration with the same connotation; and so did Hosea. Our Lord, in speaking of the sign of the end of the age—a world war, accompanied by famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places—compared it to child birth, "But all these things are the beginning of travail" (Matt. 24:8). In the verses under consideration, the prophet stated that: "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child." Isaiah stood before his intelligent audience and made those bold statements. He put them in this manner in order to attract attention. Then without waiting for any response, he asked the questions found in verses 8 and 9. Thus he called upon his audience to tell whether or not any of them had heard of such a case of childbirth. Had any seen such a thing? Of course these questions demanded a negative answer, for such was never the case. Then he asked this question, "Shall a land be born in one day? shall a nation be brought forth at once?" These questions also demanded a reply in the negative. No land shall be born in one day, and a nation shall not be brought forth at once. In other words, the prophet denied the thought that the new Israel and her land would be born without any trouble or distress. Unfortunately we have been told that the nation of Israel would be born in a day. That is exactly the opposite of what Isaiah proclaimed on this occasion. The nation must go through the period of travail, the Tribulation Period, seven years during which the judgments of God are being poured

out. The Lord has chosen His people in the furnace of affliction and will with it purge from them all dross. In so doing, He purifies them and makes them fit for His service.

"For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." The phrase translated "as soon as" also means "when." One is to judge from the facts of the context which of these renderings is preferable. Since the prophet has shown that the nation must go through a period of travail before the new Israel is born, it is better to translate the phrase by the adverb "when"; for the expression, as soon as, contradicts the idea that the nation is to pass through this period of travail and distress. Thus the better translation of the sentence under consideration is: "When Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." According to verse 9 God will bring the period of travail upon Zion. When He does, He will let nature take its course and will bring to the birth. In other words, the new Israel, the faithful remnant, will be brought safely to the birth. This occurs at the end of the period of travail, at the end of the Tribulation, when the nation acknowledges its offense and seeks His face earnestly (Hosea 5:15). At that time—after the period of travail of seven years—the iniquity of that land will be removed in one day (Zech. 3:9).

A Vision of Jerusalem Glorified, The Channel of World-Blessing

"10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn over her; 11 that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12 For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream: and ye shall suck *thereof*: ye shall be borne upon the side, and shall be dandled upon the knees. 13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14 And ye shall see *it*, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like the tender grass: and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants; and he will have indignation against his enemies" (vss. 10-14).

In verses 10 and 11 Jerusalem is thought of as the mother who nourishes all those who love her, and who rejoice with her. These who thus love her are the faithful remnant who know the plan and purpose of God for Israel and Jerusalem, and who turn to and accept the long-rejected Messiah. They will have the privilege of being nourished and sustained by "Mother" Jerusalem and will be satisfied with the abundance of her glory.

Of what type is the glory referred to here? This question is answered in verse 12, where it is stated, "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream." When the Messiah came nineteen hundred years ago, Israel did not hearken unto His commandments. Had she done so, Messiah would have extended this peace to her as a river and her righteousness would have been as the waves of the sea (Isa. 48:18). In rejecting Him, she pushed from her the rivers of peace and the ocean of righteousness, love, and joy. But when the time foreseen in Isaiah, chapter 66, arrives, she will accept her long-rejected Messiah and peace will be extended to her like a river. Then the glory of all the nations will likewise be given to her as an overflowing stream. Then those of the remnant will be nourished, according to the figure, and will be dandled upon the knee, so to speak, of "Mother" Jerusalem.

At that time the Lord himself promised to comfort this faithful remnant as a mother comforts her child. The place of the consolation will be Jerusalem. The prophet gave assurance that the faithful remnant of Israel will see this, and their hearts will rejoice. They "shall flourish like the tender grass: and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants," the faithful of Israel; but "he will have indignation against his enemies" and those of Israel. Hence when He comes, a new day will dawn for the Chosen People.

The Second Coming of Messiah

"15 For, behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and his chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render his anger with fierceness, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For by fire will Jehovah execute judgment, and by his sword, upon all flesh; and the slain of Jehovah shall be many. 17 They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves *to go* unto the gardens, behind one in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, they shall come to an end together, saith Jehovah" (vss. 15-17).

In these verses we find the reason why the servants of God in Israel will be blessed and the enemies will be destroyed. Jehovah, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, will come "with fire, and his chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render his anger with fierceness, and his rebuke with flames of fire." In Psalm 97:3,4 David foretold the coming of Messiah in flaming fire:

A fire goeth before him,
And burneth up his adversaries round about.
His lightnings lightened the world: The earth saw, and trembled."

The Apostle Paul, in II Thessalonians, chapters 1 and 2, foretold that, when Jesus returns, He will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all who know not God, and all who obey not the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus there is perfect agreement with reference to Messiah's coming in flaming fire as seen in the testimony of David, Isaiah, and Paul.

The Lord will enter into judgment with His enemies by fire and by sword. These judgments will be upon all flesh, "and the slain of Jehovah shall be many" at that time. "The slain of Jehovah shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the face of the ground" (Jer. 25:33).

The end of all idolaters and workers of iniquity is set forth in verse 17 of our passage. Even the enemies of Messiah and of Israel will hold to a form of godliness, to a form of religion, but it will not be the worship of the true God. From verse 17 it is clear that the Jews, who are included in this prophecy, will have given up the dietary rules set forth in the law of Moses with regard to their eating pork. They will act in this respect just as the Gentiles do. Yet they will go into gardens and places of worship to purify themselves and to commit gross abominations in God's sight. All of these, however, will come to an end by the personal appearance of the Lord Messiah, when He comes in glory and power.

The Completion of the Regathering of Israel

"18 For I know *their* works and their thoughts: *the time* cometh, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and shall see my glory. 19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send such as escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. 20 And they shall bring all your brethren out of all the nations for an oblation unto Jehovah, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith Jehovah, as the children of Israel bring their oblation in a clean vessel into the house of Jehovah. 21 And of them also will I take for priests *and* for Levites, saith Jehovah" (vss. 18-21).

The Lord knows the works and the thoughts of the apostates in Israel, as is set forth in verse 18; He therefore destroys them as announced in verse 17. The Lord has a plan and a purpose regarding Jerusalem and its being the metropolitan

city of the world. It is His intention that all nations and tongues shall come and see His glory. In order that they might see Him in all of His splendor, He first will purge out all of the apostates and wicked ones.

In verse 19 we see a prediction concerning the regathering of Israel to her own land. There were, according to Isaiah 11:12, to be only two regatherings. The first occurred in the days of Zerubbabel after the Babylonian captivity. There can therefore be but one more: that which has already begun and which will be consummated after the kingdom is established upon the earth. That this second restoration is a gradual one may be seen from Ezekiel, chapter 37, which sets forth the vision of the valley of dry bones. An examination of this passage shows that this regathering transpires gradually. The bones scattered over the a valley first begin to move, each taking it place with relation to others to form skeletons. Then sinews bind them together. Upon the skeletons thus formed, flesh appears; then skin. Finally, the breath of life is breathed into them and they become alive, a mighty host for God. Since these bones and their coming back to life represent the whole house of Israel (Ezek. 37:11), we know that her restoration to life and fellowship with God is a gradual process.

It has already begun, as everyone who is familiar with the situation in Palestine today knows. There are over 600,000 Jews who have returned under the present movement. There were approximate 50,000 who returned under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah after the Babylonian captivity. Thus more than ten times that number have returned under the present Zionistic movement than came back after the Exile.

It is not the plan and the will of God that all the Jews should gather out from among the nations into Palestine now. He has shown that there is to be a representative number in the Holy Land, but a reading of Isaiah, chapters 19 and 27, shows that the Jews will be gathered out from among the nations and will be settled also in Egypt and in Assyria and Syria as well as in Palestine. In other words, they will be gathered out from among the nations and brought into "the wilderness of the peoples" (Ezek. 20:35), the "fertile crescent," where the Lord will enter into judgment with them and cause them to pass under the rod, allowing only the good ones to enter into the land in order to enjoy the glory of that future age.

According to Isaiah 66:20 the Gentile nations will assist Israel in the final return to the "holy mountain Jerusalem." The prophet thinks of them as oblations unto the Lord which are thus brought back into their own land as an offering to the God of Israel. Of the faithful remnant God will take priests and Levites to conduct His worship. On this point see Isaiah 61:5,6. Israel's golden era is yet in the future.

The Millennial Jerusalem and the Miniature Hell

"22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah. 24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the dead bodies of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" (vss. 22-24).

The new heavens and the new earth mentioned in verse 22 are none other than those described in 65:17. We have already seen that, during the Tribulation Period, the judgments of God will wreck the heavens above and the earth beneath. It will therefore be necessary for Him to create these anew so that there may be a millennial reign of our Lord. Just as the new heavens and the new earth remain before God, so will the seed of Israel, the faithful remnant, remain.

Jerusalem will be the center of attraction for the entire world. All nations will go there to worship Jehovah of hosts and be taught of Him (Isa. 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-8). The Temple at Jerusalem will be known at that time as the "house of prayer for all nations."

According to 66:24 there will be a place somewhere in the vicinity of Jerusalem which might properly be called a miniature hell. The people who go up from all over the earth to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah of hosts, the Great King,

will be sent forth, after their visit, to see this place and to look "upon the dead bodies of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." There is no other name that seems as suitable for this place as the term, "a miniature hell." Will it be close to Jerusalem? One cannot say. But when Isaiah, chapter 34, is studied carefully, it seems obvious that there will be streams of liquid fire in the land of Edom. It is to be the place of God's curse. Also upon Babylon the curse will remain throughout the Millennium. These two lands will thus suffer under the curse of God whereas all other lands of the world will be delivered from it and millennial conditions will prevail in them.

What is the purpose of such an institution as this place where the wicked and transgressors will be incarcerated? Why will the people of the Millennial Age be required to go by that place and see them as they writhe in pain? One cannot afford to be dogmatic. It is quite plausible that they will be sent to view this sight in order that they might realize more graphically the price of their redemption and the blessedness of their estate since they have accepted salvation, which comes through Jesus Christ our Lord alone.

This miniature hell, which will be located upon this earth, is not to be confounded with the hell mentioned in other portions of the Scripture, and which is described in Revelation 20:10,14. In this latter place the lost of all the ages will be incarcerated forever.

But all who make their peace with God by accepting the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ will be blessed, not only through the Kingdom Age, but also throughout all eternity. May the priestly blessing of the Trinity come to all who have read these expositions of the Book of Isaiah through our Lord Jesus Christ: "24 Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee: 25 Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: 26 Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Num. 6:24-26).