

## 4. CALL, CHAPTER 43

## a. TO BE A POSSESSION

TEXT: 43:1-7

- 1 But now thus saith Jehovah that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine.
- 2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.
- 3 For I am Jehovah thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour; I have given Egypt as thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in thy stead.
- 4 Since thou hast been precious in my sight, and honorable, and I have loved thee; therefore will I give men in thy stead, and peoples instead of thy life.
- 5 Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;
- 6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth;
- 7 every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yea, whom I have made.

## QUERIES

- a. Why remind Israel she belongs to God?
- b. When will Israel walk through waters?
- c. When will the great "gathering" take place?

## PARAPHRASE

And now, in light of the foregoing, Jehovah says, I am your Creator and your Former, O Israel, so you need have no fear. I have redeemed you in the past and will do so in the future. You are mine; I have special claim on you. You did not even name yourself—I did. You were singled out by Me for a special purpose. So, when you have to pass through dangerous waters and flooded rivers you need not fear they will overcome you; when you have to walk through fires of your oppressors you will not be burned—you will not even be touched by the flames. You know who I Am, I Am Jehovah, Covenant God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I have paid a high price for you giving up whole continents like Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba as a ransom for you. Ever since the time you became My precious possession I have honored you and loved you dearly. And on account of My love for you I will continue to exchange the lives of other peoples to keep you as My special people. Do not be afraid of your enemies, for I, Your Covenant-God, Am with you always. Even if you are scattered all over the world, I promise to gather my sons and daughters from the east, west, north and south. Yes, every one who will surrender to be called by My name, I will have produced as a new creation, will have shaped him and perfected and completed him for My glory.

## COMMENTS

v. 1-4 REDEMPTION: This chapter forms the climactic statement of God's *Purpose* for Israel's servanthood—to be God's Called. This chapter also forms the conclusion to the preceding discussion of the interrelation of national Israel—covenant Israel—to the Messiah. This whole section of *Salvation Through God's Servant* (chapters 40-53), is a kaleidoscopic view of the correlation of Israel and the Messiah. Israel was called for the messianic purpose, but she sinned. God must chasten her to purify her. After her purification she will be redeemed and

from her will come the Messiah and His kingdom in which only the regenerated shall dwell.

Two words are used in verse one to emphasize Jehovah's claim upon Israel; *bara*, create and *yatzar*, form, shape, are the distinctive Hebrew words showing God's unique relationship to Israel. She is His possession by right of His having brought her into existence and having molded her into what He wants her to be. The Hebrew word for *redeemed* is *goael* and a derivative of the same word is sometimes translated *kinsman* (cf. Ruth 3:2, etc.). Israel is kin to God by creation and redemption. Israel is God's child, His son, His bride (cf. Ezek. 16:1f; Hosea 11:1f; Isa. 49:14-18; 62:1f, etc.). Israel is God's precious possession. The placing of the two names of verse one are interesting. *Yaakoov*, *Jacob*, means "defraud, circumvent, crooked, deceitful," while *Yisrael*, *Israel*, means "prevail, prince or ruler of God, or perhaps, God will rule." *Israel* is the name God gave Jacob after Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord and prevailed. Hosea appeals to the spineless, compromising Israel of his day to take again the character of its forefather who was so singleminded about striving for the spiritual birthright (cf. Hosea 12:2-6). So, Israel was what God named this nation because He redeemed it or purchased it, not only through the change made in Jacob's character, but also throughout her history. This is what God calls Israel—mine!

Not only has God redeemed Israel, He will continue to do so. He will *protect* her. When she is forced to go through waters (probably when being taken captive, for there were hardly any bridges over rivers then) God will keep her from being swept away. When they were forced to walk through fire, God would not allow the flame to consume them. A literal fulfillment of protection from fire is recorded in the event with the three Hebrew men (Daniel 3:1-30) in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar. The point is Israel need not fear extinction for God is powerful and mighty to save from any thing. God could even save them from lions (Daniel), hangmen (Esther) and their own countrymen (Jeremiah).

Jehovah, Creator of all mankind, is jealous enough for Israel, His precious servant, called to glorify His name in all the earth, He is willing to give up other nations and peoples as a substitutionary ransom to keep Israel. God is ready to sacrifice practically the whole African continent (as was then known, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba) if need be to keep Israel free to fulfill her messianic destiny. Some think this is a prediction that God is willing to, and did, assign Egypt, Ethiopia and Seba to Persia as compensation for their letting Israel return to Palestine by the edict of Cyrus (cf. II Chron. 36; Ezra 1). Egypt and Ethiopia did submit to the Persian yoke in the days of Cambyses (cir. 527-526 B.C.), about 10 years after the return of the exiled Jews to Palestine.

From the time the promise was given to Jacob (Gen. 28:14), Israel became precious to Jehovah. From that time on God placed the interests of Israel above those of other peoples. Young says, "Perhaps the general thought is simply that in choosing Israel God passed by other nations and thus they were sacrificed (i.e., were the ransom price) in its place." The point, of course, is not that Israel of itself merits this evaluation of preciousness; the point is God's grace. Paul makes this matter clear in Romans, chapters 9-10-11. Israel's preciousness consists solely in God's sovereign choice of her to be His servant. The same is true of the new Israel, the church. The church is precious not because of the merit of the human beings in her membership but because of God's sovereign redemption by grace to the church in the unique work of Christ, offered through belief and obedience of the Gospel. The preciousness of the church is shown in that God was willing to offer His *monogenes*, "only, unique" Son as a ransom.

v. 5-7 REGENERATION: The captivity, which was certain to come, was symbolic of the estrangement between Israel and God. Israel willfully and deliberately separated themselves from His holiness (cf. Isa. 30:1-14, etc.). The separation was not God's choosing. However, in order to demonstrate vividly Israel's need for God's holy fellowship, God delivered her to

captivity. But Israel is not to fear. Because a remnant has believed the prophets and remain true to Jehovah, He will bring them back from all over the earth to their land again and to their appointment with destiny. That return from the exile, however, is only a first step. The meaning of these verses is by no means restricted to the return from the captivity. As Young says, "In a far deeper sense it is addressed to all those who are afar off, who can be brought to the true Mount Zion only by the gracious working of the Lord . . . The reference is to the spiritual gathering of lost sinners in Jesus Christ." The "seed" refers to the spiritual descendants of Jacob. There are plenty of references in Isaiah to demonstrate this principle (cf. comments on Isa. 19:16-25, etc.).

Verse seven indicates that God is referring to His spiritual people and not just physical Israel, when it says "every one that is called by my name." Jesus made plain who God's sons were in John 8. Not all descended from Israel belong to Israel (cf. Rom. 9:6; Rom. 2:25-29; Gal. 6:13-16, etc.). Anyone who does not come to God through Jesus Christ is not called by God's name. The arrangement of the words, *created*, *formed*, and *made*, seem to be in an ascending scale depicting the work of God in the redemption of those called by His name. First there is the *new creation* (the initial new birth, becoming a Christian), then the *shaping* or *molding* of that life into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another and last the *perfecting* or *consummating* work of glorifying the child of God. Isaiah is talking about a regeneration. He is depicting the bringing from an Israel that was one only in name, to Israel that is one in truth!

### QUIZ

1. In how many ways did Israel belong to God?
2. What is significant about the arrangement of the names Jacob and Israel?
3. When did some Israelites literally experience salvation from fire?

4. How did God ransom Israel by using other nations and peoples?
5. What makes the new Israel, the church, so precious to God?
6. What evidence is there that verses 5-7 probably refer to messianic times?

### b. TO BE A PROCLAIMER

TEXT: 43:8-13

- 8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.
- 9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the peoples be assembled; who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth.
- 10 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: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.
- 11 I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no saviour.
- 12 I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed; and there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I am God.
- 13 Yea, since the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who can hinder it?

### QUERIES

- a. Who are the "blind" and "deaf" challenged in verse eight?
- b. Why is God so concerned about Israel's witnessing?

## PARAPHRASE

I, Jehovah, challenge the blind heathen to bring forth their gods and their soothsayers who claim they can see and hear supernatural things. Gather all the heathen nations as one; who among their gods can proclaim anything like My present prediction of the restoration of My people Israel? To prove that they can, let them cite former events which they predicted and which had really taken place. Let them present their eyewitnesses of such earlier prophecies and so prove themselves to be gods by substantiating the truthfulness of their claims. But I call you, Israel, as witness of the historical facts concerning My infallible knowledge of the future, says Jehovah. You have been Mine in a special, miraculous relationship and you can certainly testify to that experience of service. You, Israel, have enough evidence to know and believe that I Am the only God there is. There was no god before Me and there shall be none after Me. I, indeed I, am Jehovah; there is no other saviour. I have declared My power and have shown you My power by My great saving acts among you. This demonstrated to you that there was no foreign god who could claim to be a god. You have seen My deeds, you know that I am God, and therefore, you, Israel, are My witnesses. As long as time has existed, from the first day of time and before that, I Am; there are no other gods anywhere; there is no one to stop what I wish to do.

## COMMENTS

v. 8-10 MESSENGER: Israel was called by God to be His servant as a testimony among the nations of Jehovah's sovereignty (cf. Ex. 19:5; Deut. 4:6-7; 14:2; 26:18; 28:10; Psa. 135:4; Lev. 20:24-26; Deut. 7:6). The passage before us deals with God's call to this servanthood. Israel had not fulfilled her purpose (cf. Amos 3:9-11; Jer. 2:9-13; 18:13), she "out-heathened the heathen." She was given the land of Canaan

to show the heathen nations the holiness of God, but she became more unholy than the heathen around her! Now, Isaiah, speaking for Jehovah, is calling for a remnant of Israel to turn again to this God-oriented purpose.

The "blind" and the "deaf" are the Gentiles who claim they have "eyes" and "ears" to see and hear what is truth through their idols and diviners. But Jehovah challenges them to gather all the idols and soothsayers of all the nations on the earth and bring forth evidence of their abilities. God has challenged the heathen gods many times before (Moses and the Egyptian magicians; Elijah and the prophets of Baal) and He makes the challenge many times after this (Isa. 44:9f; Daniel 1-6, etc.). God is predicting, through His prophet Isaiah, the captivity and restoration of Israel. Which one of the heathen gods Israel has adopted is able to infallibly foretell the future like Jehovah? The false prophets of Israel are continually insisting that no captivity will come to them (cf. Micah 3:9-12). If the heathen gods Israel worships are gods, let them bring a record of their prophetic successes of the past. How many historical events have they foretold and seen fulfilled? Jehovah is not afraid of such a challenge for He knows they are not gods (Jeremiah demonstrated the impotence of the false prophets when he challenged the predictions of Haniah, Jer. 28:1-17). The god of Israel is the only God of truth. He alone has the truth. He alone knows righteousness and holiness. Israel is the only messenger of truth and righteousness, but they have rejected this servanthood for false gods. The challenge to the nations to amalgamate all their powers and present the best opposition they can to the sovereignty of Jehovah is much like the challenge in Joel 2:30—3:21 (see our comments there in *Minor Prophets*, by Butler, College Press).

The heathen opposition has no witnesses and no evidence. But Jehovah has. Israel is God's witness. In fact, this is their destiny. Israel is not called to be a mighty worldly power dominating other nations and exercising world-empire. That never was Israel's destiny and never shall be. The new Israel, the



church, is not of this world. Israel testified by her very existence and was called to testify by her deeds and words that Jehovah is the only God. Leupold says, "Monotheism is Israel's most precious insight. Whatever indications along this line had begun to glimmer here and there in divine revelation, all this now comes to clear expression and is finalized by our prophet." God had chosen Israel to be His servant, to be the instrument through which He could manifest His power and glory and holiness to all the earth. Israel had plenty of empirical proof of Jehovah's sovereignty. There was no reason for Israel not to know and believe there was only One God! But Israel set aside reason in favor of greed, lust and pride. For this the prophets often characterized their countrymen as irrational, stupid, perverse, self-willed, stubborn (cf. Ezek. ch. 2 & 3, etc.). The prophets did preserve a small remnant of faithful who did become witnesses in all the earth to the sovereignty of Jehovah. The dispersion of these faithful by the Persians, Greeks and Romans prepared the way for the preaching of the gospel all over the world in the first century A.D.

v. 11-13 MESSAGE: The absolute sovereignty of Jehovah is the message Israel is to proclaim. They are witnesses to it. They have seen and heard first-hand—for that is what a witness is. A witness does not tell what he thinks or feels—he tells what he has seen and heard. What Israel has seen is only Jehovah can save. Jehovah demonstrated to the sensory organs of man (eyes, ears, touch, etc.) that He alone saves. Jehovah did not reveal His saving power to Israel in a systematic philosophy—He revealed it in deeds, events, in the historical, human frame-of-reference. He also demonstrated experientially that none of the gods of man, none of the pagan idols, could save. Therefore, Israel *must* be God's witness. God has not revealed Himself so precisely and extensively to any other people. God has no other witnesses. Isaiah knows about such a "manifest destiny." When Isaiah was in the temple, God asked, "Who will go for us, whom shall I send?" (cf. Isa. 6).

There cannot be another witness and there cannot be another God. There is only one God. He is from everlasting to everlasting.

He had no beginning and has no end. Where is there one who can gainsay that!? God may be morally rejected and disobeyed, but His eternal power and deity cannot rationally be denied (cf. Rom. 1:16f). Philosophy, science or psychology can never *disprove* the existence of God. Men would have to know everything there is to know, have existed everywhere there is existence in order to absolutely disprove God. So far, all the evidence proves beyond any *reasonable* doubt, that Jehovah does exist and none can deliver out of His hand and none can hinder whatever He wants to do!

### QUIZ

1. What does the Bible say in other books about Israel's call?
2. What is God's challenge to the heathen concerning their gods?
3. Where has another challenge to pagan powers like this been issued in the prophets?
4. If there was plenty of evidence for Israel to witness the sovereignty of God, why didn't she?
5. What is a witness?
6. How did Israel qualify as a witness?
7. Why *must* Israel be God's witness?

### c. TO BE A PROTOTYPE

TEXT: 43:14-21

- 14 Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:  
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.
- 15 I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your  
King.
- 16 Thus saith Jehovah. who maketh a way in the sea, and a

path in the mighty waters;

- 17 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):
- 18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.
- 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.

### QUERIES

- a. How does Babylon enter into the picture here?
- b. What "way" does Jehovah make in the sea?
- c. What are the "rivers in the desert"?

### PARAPHRASE

A prediction! Your Covenant-God, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says, For you I have decreed the doom of Babylon. I have determined to send an army to Babylon to execute My decree and I will defeat them and send them all fleeing like fugitives in the merchant ships and battle ships they are so proud of now. Though you are about to go into captivity and be without a human king, I want you to know I am Jehovah, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your only real and everlasting King. It is Jehovah who says all this; the God who makes pathways in the seas as He did through the Red Sea when He delivered your forefathers from Egypt. Jehovah was the One who brought that great Egyptian army with its horses

and chariots to its grave in the sea. Jehovah literally extinguished the enemies of His people there, like a man blows out a lamp. But, do not let your minds dwell on the past to the point that you wish you could go back to those days. Look! That is nothing compared with what I am going to do! I am going to do something completely new; in fact, I have already begun it. Do you not recognize what I am starting to do? I am beginning to make drastic changes that will affect the whole world. I am going to give living water to a desert-type world of humanity through my servant-people, my chosen, as they testify to My redemptive acts.

### COMMENTS

v. 14-17 **OPPRESSOR DEFEATED:** God makes a prophetic decree. He dooms Babylon, the oppressor of His covenant remnant, *before* Judah is taken captive. Babylon is already looming on the political horizon as a pagan world power standing in opposition to God's redemptive people (cf. comments on chapter 39, Vol. II). How does Jehovah "send" to Babylon and bring them down? Apparently this is a prophecy of the Persian conquest of Babylon. It was the Persians who after conquering Babylon, decreed and financed the return of the Jews to Palestine (see our comments, *Daniel*, College Press, chapters 7-9). The Persians served as God's instrument to execute His deliverance of Judah. There is a great deal of irony in the predicted Babylonian fall. They will flee like fugitives. Once proud, secure, self-sufficient, powerful Babylon who made so many flee their homelands as fugitives will suffer the same fate (see Habakkuk's description of the fall of Babylon). Even more ironic, the great fleet of merchant ships and navy vessels which made Babylon so rich and powerful, and which brought so much gladness to the hearts of the Babylonians, will be jammed full of terrified, fleeing fugitives. The Chaldeans, like the Assyrians, had mighty warrior kings. They were rich, powerful and pompous. They were feared

and idolized by all the world. But Israel's king is *King of kings!* He is Jehovah, Creator, Judge, Holy One and Redeemer. Though Israel might appear to be without a king during the captivity in Babylon, her King would demonstrate His power time and time again (cf. Dan. 2:47; 3:28; 4:37; 6:25-27). Finally, He would demonstrate His sovereignty in the restoration of the nation under Ezra, Zerubbabel and Nehemiah (cf. II Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). The "way in the sea" in verses 16 and 17 is a metaphorical allusion to Jehovah's deliverance of the children of Israel through the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses. Just as Jehovah overcame natural obstacles and powerful, wicked human oppressors when He delivered Israel from Egypt, so He will deliver Israel from her captivities under Assyria and Babylon. That mighty Egyptian army with its chariots of war, before which Israel trembled and cringed, lay extinct at the bottom of the Red Sea. So, Jehovah will snuff out the mighty Babylonian empire in one night! (cf. Dan. 5:1-30).

v. 18-21 OPPRESSED DELIVERED: But, as grand and glorious as these great national deliverances are, they are warned they should not let their hopes rest on them. God is going to do a new thing much more glorious. The "new" thing is apparently not just the deliverance from the Babylonian captivity, though that is its starting place. It must be more than that for the deliverance from captivity is not any more glorious than the exodus from Egypt. The "new" thing in itself is the wondrous new redemption accomplished in the death and resurrection of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 42:9-10; 48:6; 62:2; 65:17; 66:22; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26; 18:31, for the *new* thing God is going to do in the messianic kingdom). Even "now" it was beginning to be apparent to those who had the faith to see it. The revelations of Ezekiel (40-47) and Daniel (7-12) graphically outlined the mission of Israel as prototypical of the redemption for all mankind from their captivity in sin. Men of faith, like Daniel, recognized that God was already beginning to do this "new" thing. They anxiously desired to know when it would come to its completion (cf. Dan. 12:5f; I Pet. 1:10-12). The

figurative language describing "a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert," is a favorite vehicle of prophetic literature to describe the messianic blessedness (cf. Isa. 19:23; 35:1-10; 51:3, etc.). When God shall have finally and fully regenerated men, nature itself shall also be redeemed (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). This, too, is a much used expression of the prophets to show that, as Keil and Delitzsch say, "when the sufferings of the people of God shall be brought to an end, the sufferings of creation will also terminate; for humanity is the heart of the universe, and the people of God (understanding by this the people of God according to the Spirit) are the heart of humanity." In other words, the consummation of God's redemptive work will result in the reclamation of men and nature which were cursed in the garden of Eden because of sin. God is working in regenerate men by the power of the gospel received and lived by faith. Regenerated man will then be at harmony with his God, himself and God's creation. At this point, God will redeem his natural creation and create a new heaven and a new earth (II Pet. 3:13). Thus, Paradise will be restored. But it is not the surroundings, the natural environment that is significant. God can make that over by sheer force. He has made man with a free will to choose his own destiny. The remaking of man is all important. Heaven will not be heaven so much for that natural place in which we find ourselves as that nature which is found in us. No better commentary on verse 21 can be found than that in I Peter 2:9: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

### QUIZ

1. How did God send to Babylon and bring them down?
2. What is the irony in the prediction of Babylon's fall?
3. Why tell Israel not to remember the former things?
4. What is the "new" thing?

5. Why mention the "beasts" of the field honoring Jehovah?
6. When did Israel finally fulfill its purpose to "set forth" the praise of Jehovah?

#### d. TO BE PERFECTED

TEXT: 43:22-28

- 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.
- 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 have transgressed against me.
- 28 Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; and I will make Jacob a curse, and Israel a reviling.

#### QUERIES

- a. Did the people of Israel consider God's offerings a burden?
- b. What is the "sweet cane" they should have bought?
- c. How are they to put God in "remembrance"?

## PARAPHRASE

In spite of all My graciousness in calling you to the honored place of servant of the living God, you have not honored that call by seeking after Me, O Jacob. As a matter of record, you have said, We're tired of Jehovah, and of doing things His way! All the offerings of sheep and all the other sacrifices you have brought are not really because you love Me, but are dedicated to your own self-righteousness. The offerings and sacrifices I commanded in My law were intended to give you a way to express your joy for My grace and goodness to you, never did I think they would be considered insufferable by you. You never did anything special for Me like buying expensive sweet cane to make the sacred incense and anointing oil. You did not drench My altar with the choicest fat of your sacrifices. But you have gone out of your way to load Me down with your insults and rebellions. I am sick and tired of your disobedience. When I blot out your transgressions and forget your sins, it will be for My own sake and out of grace—not from any perfect goodness on your part. Remember who I am. I am God and you receive forgiveness on My terms—not yours. If you think you can justify yourself without My grace, then plead your case! The father of your nation was a sinner, and all those who have been sent to teach you not to sin have sinned. Because of this continual increase in rebellion and sin I will take Israel and her spiritual leaders and profane them in a pagan land. There they will be like outlaws and mocked as fugitives.

## COMMENTS

v. 22-24 TO PRAISE: Israel was called to praise and exalt the name of Jehovah by worshipping Him and keeping His commandments. By worship and obedience to Jehovah's Law, Israel would thus "call" upon Him in faith and show her dependence on His grace. However, Israel did *not* call upon



Him. Israel did not obey Jehovah's Law. Israel considered the Law of Jehovah insufferable, restrictive, boring, and she tired of its discipline, (cf. Isa. 7:13; Jer. 9:5; Micah 6:3; Hab. 3:2; Malachi 2:17, etc.). Israel tired of God as lustful men tire of their wives (Jer. 3:19-20; Hosea 1 & 2; Ezek. 16:1f). The word of the Lord became to Israel an object of scorn (Jer. 6:10, 16). To be sure, Israel had trampled God's courts with multitudes of sacrifices and offerings (Isa. 1:10-17). But, the prophet speaks with sarcasm. Israel was not really bringing all those sacrifices to honor Jehovah. They were doing it to honor themselves. They were more than willing to bring ten thousand offerings as a substitute for putting to practice the Law of God in personal godliness (Micah 6:6-8). They were willing to earn religious merit from sacrifices as long as the Holy One of Israel did not demand moral holiness from them. It was not the number of offerings that burdened the Israelites, it was the moral "strings" attached to a humble relationship of faith and obedience to a Holy God that "wearied" Israel. The astonishing thing is Jehovah's law was always a refreshing, regenerating, pleasurable experience every time Israel obeyed it—individually and nationally (cf. Ps. 119, etc.). Jehovah intended only blessing in His Law (Deut. 28:1f). History proved it!

The "sweet cane" (Heb. *kaneh*) of verse 24 was probably the scented calamus (reed) or some kind of aromatic bark. It was an ingredient of the holy oil (Ex. 30:23); imported from a distance (Jer. 6:20; Ezek. 27:19) and was thus rare and costly. Its sweetness refers to the scent, not the taste. Another Hebrew word in this verse is significant (*kaniytha*) because it is from the same root as the word translated "sweet cane" but means "bought" or "purchased." There appears to be a definite play upon words here emphasizing the preciousness of the offering of cane. *Reviythaniy* is translated "filled" in the same verse but literally means "moisten, satiate," or "drench." The point of this verse is simply this: the people of Israel had not really extended themselves in giving offerings of quality or quantity. They probably skimmed on their offerings much the same as

their descendents did after the return from the captivity (cf. Malachi 1:6-14; 3:6-12, etc.). On the contrary, Israel had gone out of its way to load Jehovah down with its insulting rebellion. The word "burdened" in this verse is from the Hebrew root *'avad* meaning "servile labor." The guiltiness of Israel pressed upon The Holy One of Israel, as a burden does upon a servant. The other word, "wearied," is from the Hebrew root *vaga'* which means literally, "fatigued" or "exhausted." Instead of Israel fulfilling its calling to *praise* Jehovah, it was a *pain* to Him. But the Lord is going to create for Himself an Israel (a new Israel, ruled by His new David) that will fulfill its calling of praise. And He is beginning the work with the prophets and the captivity (cf. Isa. 43:19).

v. 25-28 To PARDON: Jehovah is going to perfect (bring to fruition or completion) from the Israel of Isaiah's day, a *pardon*ed Israel. There is a very interesting three-fold repetition of the personal pronoun "I, I, I am," in the Hebrew construction of verse 25, translated "I, even I, am he . . ." It means emphatically that Jehovah *alone* is responsible for any blotting (*makhah*, taking away even down to the very core or marrow) out of transgressions. Jehovah does it exclusively from His own graciousness, for His own name's sake. He does it because of Who He Is—not from any merit of man's person. The rest of the context indicates this is the emphasis. Jehovah wills to pardon man and Jehovah accomplishes man's pardon by His work and Jehovah decrees the terms of acceptance. Man is left free to accept or reject the divinely procured pardon according to man's willingness to obey the divinely decreed terms. One thing is certain; standing before the tribunal of God, no man can claim self-justification. Jehovah warns Israel to "remember" Who He Is! He knows their sins (cf. Amos. 5:12; 5:8; Ezek. 8:12; 9:9, etc.). The first "father" of Israel, Abraham, called "father of the faithful and friend of God," sinned. All the "teachers" (prophets, priests and kings) of Israel sinned (Isa. 53:6; Psa. 14:2-3; 53:3)—all have sinned. Therefore, Jehovah would have to take away

Israel's priests (because they were leading Israel to sin) into captivity. Israel's access to God through its priesthood and its sanctuary would be suspended until she repented. Jacob (Israel) was to be made a "curse" (*kherem* in Hebrew, literally, *devoted* or *banned*, or *outlawed*). Israel was to suffer the *ban* of God and become an outlaw (read Deut. ch. 28:15f), and instead of being respected by vile pagan nations, Israel would be reviled. God called her from the beginning to show forth His wonderful grace and forgiveness through covenant relationship, but she rejected His covenant and His grace. Now she must be "allured" back to pardon in a new covenant relationship, but through "trouble" (see our comments, *Minor Prophets*, Hosea 2:14-15, College Press). Israel's pardon will be perfected when she brings forth her Messiah, but she must be prepared for that by chastening.

### QUIZ

1. How did Israel express its weariness of Jehovah?
2. Why did God say He had not wearied them with offerings?
3. How did Israel burden God?
4. Why call Israel to remember Jehovah?
5. What perfection is Jehovah calling Israel to in this section?
6. What curse was placed upon Israel?

### EXAMINATION

#### CHAPTERS FORTY THROUGH FORTY-THREE

#### DEFINITION

(Define the following words or phrases as they were discussed in the comments.)

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. speak <i>comfortably</i>   | 3. <i>wilderness</i>          |
| 2. <i>voice</i> of one crying | 4. <i>measured</i> the waters |

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 5. <i>wait</i>         | 11. <i>created</i>       |
| 6. <i>keep silence</i> | 12. <i>formed</i>        |
| 7. <i>worm</i>         | 13. <i>redeemed</i>      |
| 8. <i>servant</i>      | 14. <i>blind or deaf</i> |
| 9. <i>my chosen</i>    | 15. <i>new thing</i>     |
| 10. <i>hear</i>        | 16. <i>sweet cane</i>    |

### MEMORIZATION

The \_\_\_\_\_ of one that crieth, \_\_\_\_\_ ye in the wilderness the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jehovah; make level in the \_\_\_\_\_ a highway for our God. Every \_\_\_\_\_ shall be exalted, and every \_\_\_\_\_ and hill shall be made \_\_\_\_\_; and the uneven shall be made \_\_\_\_\_, and the rough places a plain: and the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all \_\_\_\_\_ shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it. (40:3-5)

### EXPLANATION

1. Explain the connection between man's strengthening and Isaiah's focus on the nature of Jehovah.
2. Explain why men find such fascination with idols and images.
3. Explain Isaiah's command that the "islands" keep "silent."
4. Explain why the Servant who will not cry or lift up his voice was such a contrast in character to the common Jewish concept of Jehovah's Servant.
5. Explain who the servant of Jehovah is who comes from the "north."
6. Explain Isaiah's use of three different servants in these chapters.

## APPLICATION

(In its context every scripture has one meaning—the author's intended meaning. How may the following be applied in the believer's life?)

1. Why do we need applied to our lives Isaiah's teaching on the transcendence or independence of God?
2. May we use Isaiah's repeated references to the wonders of creation in any application for today's world?
3. What application of Israel's servanthood to God can we make in the church's relationship to Christ today?
4. Is there an application (besides the fulfillment of prophecy) for us in the task God gave to the prophet when He said, "comfort ye my people"?
5. May we learn from the symptoms of unbelief in the people of Isaiah's day, something to be applied to the society in which we live?
6. Does God still use men and natural forces as His agents in history today? Can we apply principles to understand history today from the inspired revelation of history in Isaiah's day?
7. Is there some application that may be made about religious music from this section of Isaiah (esp. 42:10-17)?

## B. POWER OF THE LORD'S SERVANT CHAPTERS 44-49

### 1. SOVEREIGN OVER ALL GODS, CHAPTER 44

#### a. SHOWS FAVOR TO THE FAITHFUL

TEXT: 44:1-8

1 Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: