

## 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:

- 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.
- 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 besides me? yea, there is no Rock; I know not any.

### QUERIES

- a. Who is "Jeshurun"?
- b. When is this promise of the Spirit to be fulfilled?
- c. Why the different names in verse five?

### PARAPHRASE

Although chastisement is sure to come to you, O Jacob my servant, I want you to know I called you Israel because I have chosen you for something better which will surely result from your chastening if you will listen and obey Me. First of all,

remember, I, Jehovah, created you as a nation; your birth as a people was My doing. Surely you know I will help you. Do not be afraid Jacob my servant, Jeshurun, my chosen, for your offspring who are faithful and the messianic seed among you will have My Spirit poured out upon them and they will spring up and grow a harvest like the dry ground produces when streams of water are poured upon it. They will thrive like the abundant grass and trees that grow by the river banks. One by one they will proclaim that they belong to Jehovah. Some will bear witness that they belong to Jehovah by writing it down, counting it an honor to be called "Jehovah's." Secondly, need I remind you that I am the King of Israel; I am Israel's Redeemer; I am Jehovah, Lord of all the heavenly hosts; I am before all that begins and after all that ends—First and Last; there is no other God besides Me. If there is any man or god like Me, let him stand forth and declare it and prove his claim by ordering the course of history like I have from the very beginning. If there is anyone like Me let him prove it by predicting what will happen in the future. No, Israel, you have nothing to fear from these others who claim they are gods and have omnipotent power. I have proved to you long ago that I am the only God there is haven't I? By the prophecies I have declared and their fulfillments which you have experienced, you are witnesses to the fact that I am the only God. Is there any other God? No! None that I know about! There is no other Rock!

### COMMENTS

v. 1-5 INVIGORATES: Although the chastening judgment of Jehovah is predicted with absolute certainty (chapter 43) upon Israel, still Israel is the chosen of the Lord. They were not even a nation when God chose them. He took them as nomadic shepherders and formed them as an instrument of His from nothing! God molded them from useless clay into a vessel for His purpose (cf. Rom. 9:19f). They should surely know that

God desired with all His heart to help them and favor them. But God could not help them become the vessel they were chosen to be because they did *not want* to be that vessel! The Lord knew, and predicted through His prophet here, there would be a remnant formed from the chastening captivity which would believe and surrender to its chosen purpose. This remnant, even now being formed by Isaiah's preaching, need not fear the impending judgment. God's purpose will survive through this remnant called Jeshurun (the name means: right, upright, esteemed, righteous). The prophet suddenly makes a dramatic shortening of perspective in verse three. From the promise of help to the remnant of Israel formed from the chastening captivity Isaiah focuses his prophetic telescope down on the time when God will "pour my Spirit upon thy seed . . . and thine offspring." God's redemptive purpose will be accomplished ultimately in the "seed" and "offspring" of Israel. What is this pouring out of the Spirit? Is it the special, miraculous Spirit on the apostles at Pentecost (cf. Joel 2:28f; Acts 2:14f), or is it the promise of the Holy Spirit to all obedient believers (Isa. 32:14; Acts 2:38-39)? Isaiah could be making a general prophecy in which both were intended since without the miraculous revelation of the gospel covenant terms of salvation through the Spirit to the apostles there could have been no indwelling presence of the Spirit. Whatever the case, we feel certain Isaiah's prophecy of the Spirit here is intended to be fulfilled in the new covenant believer. Christ is the "seed" and "offspring" (cf. Gal. 3:15-29) and Christians are "offspring" by being in Him. So, Isaiah has skipped from the Captivity to the New Covenant without any mention of the centuries between. Keil and Delitzsch think "the threefold *zeh*" (demonstrative pronoun) (*one . . . another . . . another*) indicates verse five is speaking of the heathen (cf. Psalms 87:4-5). Gentiles will take pride in belonging to Jehovah. They will confess their allegiance orally and *yiketov* (from *kathav*, to subscribe) in writing. The emphatic willingness of the Gentile to allow himself to be "surnamed" Israel is an astounding prophecy in view of the contempt most of the heathen world had for the

Hebrew and his God. Nothing short of conversion and rebirth could fulfill this prophecy!

v. 6-8 INFORMS: Man thinks in terms of beginnings and endings. Timelessness is outside man's experience. God condescends to man's limited experience and calls Himself, the first, and the last. When time began, God was already there; when time shall end, God will still be there. Many heathen people claimed such eternal existence for their gods, but they could not prove it. Jehovah demonstrated His eternal deity, not only in the things He made (cf. Rom. 1:18f), but also in the predictions and revelations He gave through His prophets. Jehovah challenged and defeated scores of false prophets and false priests (scoffers of the days of Noah; magicians of Pharaoh in Moses' day; false prophets of Baal in the days of Elijah; the witch of Endor in King Saul's day; the false prophet Hananiah in Jeremiah's day). None of these were able to meet the challenge of Jehovah. In every instance Jehovah demonstrated that only He has absolute knowledge and power. Now, Isaiah is emphatically reminding his generation that as the Lord's servant the power of Almighty God is available to them in the supernatural revelation of Jehovah through His prophets. He knows their future and their destiny—they do not need to be afraid—they simply need to trust Him. Has He not from of old proven His omniscience? And are they not witnesses to it? There is no other god they need to fear.

### QUIZ

1. Who is the seed and offspring of verse three?
2. Why is the prediction of verse five such an astounding one?
3. When had God proved He was the only God?
4. Why should Israel not be afraid?

## b. SHOWS THE FRAUDULENCE OF FALSE GODS

TEXT: 44:9-20

- 9 They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity; and the things that they delight in shall not profit; and their own witnesses see not, nor know: that they may be put to shame.
- 10 Who hath fashioned a god, or molten an image that is profitable for nothing?
- 11 Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; they shall fear, they shall be put to shame together.
- 12 The smith maketh an axe, and worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with his strong arm: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth; he drinketh no water, and is faint.
- 13 The carpenter stretcheth out a line; he marketh it out with a pencil; he shapeth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compasses, and shapeth it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house.
- 14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the holm-tree and the oak, and strengtheneth for himself one among the trees of the forest: he planteth a fir-tree, and the rain doth nourish it.
- 15 Then shall it be for a man to burn; and he taketh thereof, and warmeth himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread: yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.
- 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:
- 17 and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it and worshippeth, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

- 18 They know not, neither do they consider: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.
- 19 And none calleth to mind, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?
- 20 He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside; and he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

### QUERIES

- a. Why the question of verse ten?
- b. Why the detailed description of the work?
- c. How have their eyes been shut?

### PARAPHRASE

Those who carve out graven images and call them gods are all fools. These idols which they are so proud of are worthless. All those who make testimonies to idols are as dumb as the idols because they have blinded themselves to the truth about their gods. Who but a fool would create something with his own hands and call it a god when he knows it cannot be greater than himself. All those who join with this fool who has made his own god will also be shown to be fools. Yes, and included in this group of fools are the workmen who manufactured the idol—they stand right alongside the other fools. The foolishness of the making of idols is seen in the exhaustive amounts of energy craftsmen waste in manufacturing gods which cannot see or know. The iron-smith has had to first make his tools to work the metal which covers the wooden image. Then he

uses these tools, working long, hard, exhaustive hours working and reworking the metal. He foolishly works himself so long over the forge he gets weak and almost faints. Before he wastes this much energy, the carpenter has gone to great lengths to sketch the image on a block of wood, shape it with his tools, sketch some more, work it some more, and what does he end up with—something in the image of man. Even if it is in the image of the most masculine of men, it is still a man-image and then it is put into a man-made temple. But before the carpenter has wasted all his energies in producing the mere image of a man to call his god, the woodsman has wasted time, energy and money planting trees, cultivating them, selecting just the right one. Then he cuts it down and half of it may be used to make an idol and half of it may be used to fire an oven for cooking meals. Yes, as stupid as it may sound, a man will take a tree and with half of it he will build a fire and warm himself and cook his meals and with the other half of it he will carve himself an image of man and fall down before it and worship it. Incredible as it may sound, a man takes half a tree and builds a fire, cooks his meal, stands right there in front of the fire and says, Oh, that feels good, I feel that heat warming me; then, with what is left of that same tree, he carves an idol and falls down and worships, praying to it, Deliver me, oh my god! Such idiocy—they act like they do not have any brains at all. Apparently they have never reflected a moment on how stupid such an action is! They have plastered shut their own eyes so they cannot see and they have plastered shut their hearts so they cannot understand. These fools never stop to really think all this out with any perception. They never reason this way: Now, part of this tree I have burned in the fire and cooked my meal on! Does it make sense to take the other half of a piece of fuel and make it into something as deprecating and shaming to good sense as an idol? They never stop to think: Shall I, a living, thinking, feeling being, fall down to a chunk of wood and call it a god? The fool who makes idols, so easily reduced to ashes, has been deluded by his own choice. He really does not want spiritual



deliverance and so finds none and it never occurs to him to say, Isn't this all a big lie?

## COMMENTS

v. 9-17 GRAVEN IMAGES: There are a number of Hebrew words for *idol*; *'alilim* (a thing of nought); *atsabbim* (an image of grief); *gilulim* (a filthy image); *tsirim* (images of stone); *teraphim* (images) and others. The word used in verse nine is *pesel* which means specifically "graven thing" or sculpture. The object of the *pesel* or sculpture was to make some material into a representation of the invisible God to be worshipped and thus it was an idol. The word translated *delight* is also interesting; it is *hkamudyehem* which means *desirable, delectable, precious, darling*. Their graven images were more than ornaments! They venerated, pampered and worshiped those pieces of stone and chunks of wood much like the ignorant masses of India worship cows and the Buddhists of Japan worship statues of bronze and gold.

Isaiah is shaming the foolishness of the people who make and worship idols as much as he is the idols themselves! Those who make them are *tohu*, "void, empty, vain" people. Their "witnesses" is reference to the idolaters who are the only witnesses the idols could have. The idols are dumb and so are those idolaters (the people) who testify to them. It must have taken a great deal of courage for Isaiah to make such scathing public rebuke of idolatry. It had been instigated and approved by Ahaz and was practiced by the majority of the population. The prophet presents a sarcastic question: Who but a fool would fashion something with his own hands and call it a god when it cannot ever be more than it is—a piece of wood or stone? In verse 11 Isaiah offers both a prediction and a challenge. He predicts that idolaters will someday be acknowledged as the fools they really are. His prediction has come true. Idolatry stands discredited as utter folly in most of the world today. The discrediting of idolatry is due fundamentally

to Christianity, not science! Science is due to Christianity! Isaiah challenges that if all the idolaters and idols could be gathered together in one great mass meeting to substantiate the truthfulness of idols, they could present no evidence or verification. Their images would still remain dumb, unable to speak, hear or see and unable to deliver, save or act at all!

Our author now begins (v. 12-17) one of the most satirical, comical passages of the Bible! This is the graphic, ludicrous picture of the idol-smith as seen from God's perspective. We must understand that most idols were composites of wood and metal. First, a wooden image was carved with the desired features. Then molten metal (gold, silver, bronze, etc.) was poured over the wooden image and the metal is then polished and worked again into the desired product. All this craftsmanship required proper tools and so Isaiah begins his picture describing the hot, exhausting, famishing work invested by human beings in just the tools to make idols. All that human energy to make tools to make something that is nothing! Then the craftsman *hkarash* (*artificer, engraver*, probably from the root, *to scratch*), spends long hours sketching, measuring, shaping, remeasuring, shaping again and the end product is the image of a man! Perhaps it would be the most masculine man with the most perfect features the craftsman could fashion, but still the image of man. Water cannot rise above its level. So, the human cannot produce the divine—not even an *image* of the divine! And the *image* of man is not alive. It is only an image of the features of man—not man! Most idols are much more decadent than that because they are images of beasts and creeping things!

The prophet has described the process of idol-making in reverse order. In verses 14-17 he describes the initial steps in the formation of a graven image. Even before the craftsmen begin there is much human energy exerted on a project of "nothingness." The woodsman must spend time deciding on the proper tree (only the best will do for one's god). Then much energy and time is invested in hewing down the tree, sectioning it and hauling it to the craftsman. But before all this

long years of time has been invested in planting, nourishing and protecting the sapling until it was time to harvest it for idol-making. The destiny and existence of this "god" was totally dependent upon the circumstances of weather and growth and man's whims of selection and harvesting it should appear absolutely idiotic to think the thing formed was a "god"! But that isn't all! After planting a sprout, watching it grow into a sapling, then a tree, then taking all the pains to select, harvest, transport, and sell to the craftsman, one watches as the craftsman takes half of the log for a "god" and casts the other half aside for cook-wood! How utterly incredible! Out of the same log a man makes a god and fuels a fire to cook his meal or warm his body! What supernatural guidance did the craftsman use to decide from which half to make a god and which to burn in the fire? Why couldn't the half in the fire have made a god equally as well as the other half? There is an interesting use of the word *raiyth* from the root *raah to see*. The Hebrews used *see* often to mean *feel, experience*. The idea is the contrast between *feeling* the warmth of the fire made by the same wood the man falls down before to worship as a god! How senseless! He has just felt the warmth from the fire of the wood and now he cries out, Deliver me, to part of the same wood! How can men and women be so stupid?

v. 18-20 GULLIBLE IDOLATERS: Lange says the *tahk* (shut, plaster shut) of verse 18 should be considered as the nominal form and take as its nearest qualification the word *'aeyneyhem* which is 3 pers. pl. masc. In other words, *they* plastered their eyes shut—not God. It is apparent from the context that the idolater exercised his own choice in knowing or not knowing the utter stupidity of idolatry. The Hebrew *lo-yashyiv el-libbo* means literally, "carry not back into the heart," and is translated in the ASV "none calleth to mind." Evidently these idolaters once had understanding about the vanity of idols, but they did not "carry it back into their hearts." They rejected any willing reflection or investigation of their practices. They refused to come to the light lest their deeds be exposed (cf. Jn. 3:18-20). It certainly was not because they were incapable

of understanding the stupidity of their practice—they simply did not want to “carry it back into their minds.” *To'evah* is “an abhorrence” or an “abomination.” Its evaluation comes from God, not from man. Men who make them think them darling—God calls them abominations! Idols insult God and degrade and eventually destroy men whom God made in His own image.

The man who makes idols of wood and metal which are so easily reduced to ashes has been led astray from truth by a heart overpowered with self-delusion and cannot be saved nor does it ever occur to him to say, Isn't all this a big lie? The most enslaving delusion is self-delusion, because it has to do with selfish feelings—not objective truth. There does not seem to be any hope for these idolaters of Isaiah's people unless they are willing to investigate what is outside their own feelings and desires. As long as men accept only what agrees with their feelings and desires, and are unwilling to accept that something may be valid truth outside their own autonomous selves, they cannot be saved. God is transcendent. He is the objective Object. He is the eternal Person. He is truth, outside of and beyond man. His being, objectivity and truthfulness must be validated by His revelation of Himself. Man cannot reduce Him to man's limited experience for man can rise no higher than himself (as evidenced by his idols)!

## QUIZ

1. What is a “graven image”?
2. How would you characterize Isaiah's mood in this dissertation against idol-making?
3. What is a “carpenter”?
4. How does the idol-maker “see” the fire?
5. What is the meaning of “none calleth to mind”?
6. Why is the idol-maker unable to evaluate idolatry as a lie?

c. SHOWS THE FRUSTRATION OF FOOLISH COUNSEL

TEXT: 44:21-28

- 21 Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have found thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.
- 22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.
- 23 Sing, O Ye heavens, for Jehovah hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel.
- 24 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am Jehovah, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone: that spreadeth abroad the earth (who is with me?);
- 25 that frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;
- 26 that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof;
- 27 that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers;
- 28 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.

QUERIES

- a. What "things" are to be "remembered" by Israel?
- b. Who are the "liars" of verse 25?
- c. Why mention Cyrus again?

## PARAPHRASE

As you contemplate the idiocy of idolatry, remember the following things too, O Jacob, and Israel. First, you are mine. I chose you and I created you as a people, to be My servant in a divine destiny. Second, I could never forget you Israel, for it was I who blotted out your transgressions and sins. You must return to Me and never forget Me, Israel, for I purchase you with the price of redemption. Indeed, your redemption is so glorious it involves the heavens, mountains, and the forests. The whole universe will sing and shout Jehovah's praise. Jehovah's redemption of Israel will, in its completion, redound to His glory in Israel. This is what Jehovah, your Redeemer and Progenitor says: I am Jehovah-the-Faithful. I am Jehovah, Creator of all things. I alone formed the heavens and the earth. Who could say they helped Me? I frustrate the fulfillments of the false prophets and expose them as liars and make the soothsayers appear to be mad men. I refute the wisdom of unbelieving counselors and demonstrate it to be foolishness. But when My servants, the prophets, predict that Jerusalem shall be inhabited and the cities of Judah shall be built and that the waste places shall be populated, I make their predictions come to pass! When I say to what opposes My redemptive people, Be gone! it shall be gone! And when I say Cyrus shall be My shepherd to fulfill My purposes by giving permission for the building of Jerusalem and the Temple, that is exactly what shall come to pass.

## COMMENTS

v. 21-23 **FORGIVENESS IS IN JEHOVAH:** The message of this section is that Israel is to *remember* (Heb. *zekar*) who Jehovah is. We remind the reader, this is the very essence of biblical religion—the realization of the objective Personhood of God. Biblical religion is not how man feels, but what man acknowledges about who God is and what God has said. Especially

Israel is admonished to remember who Jehovah is in view of the foregoing expose of the idiocy of idolatry. All men are vulnerable to idolatry if they do not acknowledge the objective reality of the eternal, supernatural Personhood of Jehovah. Men must have a god. He will make one of wood or stone, of science or government, of fame or fortune—or even of himself. Israel must remember that Jehovah chose her and created her for Himself. He evidenced His special claim upon her in ages past by miraculous powers of deliverance, sustenance, subjugations and revelations. He demonstrated that He was a living God, capable and willing to guide and guard Israel over thousands of years. He never forgot her!

The blotting out of Israel's sin is apparently in promise here. We know from the New Testament that the actual, historical event which blotted out sin and *accomplished* redemption was the atoning death of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 10:1-18). The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. The Hebrew who offered his sacrificial lamb lived in faith that God would, someday, accomplish the act which would atone for his sins and thus fulfill His promises. The point being stressed in verse 22 is willingness and mercifulness of God in promising to blot out Israel's sin and offering her, even then, a way to believe in that promise. The redemption spoken of in verses 22 and 23 cannot refer to the return from the exile, for there was no permanence to that. The Hebrew word *goal* is repeated in this text and it implies more than forgiveness of sins; it implies that a price has been paid to purchase Israel. That price was God's dear Son on Calvary. Certainly, the redemptive plan included God's deliverance of Israel from her captivity so she might bring forth the Suffering Servant. And this is exactly what Israel needed to *remember* now—her redemptive servanthood. She needed to remember that God had called her and promised her (in type and prophecy) redemption. God's promises are as good as done! God can direct His prophets to predict the future as if it were accomplished!

All nature is bound up with the destiny of mankind. When man sinned, God cursed nature so man would not, in his sinful

state, fall in love with this earth. When Christ died on the cross suffering the curse upon man and earning man's redemption, He also suffered the curse upon nature and earned nature's redemption. Therefore, in view of the certainty of God's redemption of Israel, all of God's creation can rejoice and sing and shout because all of God's creation is equally certain of its redemption. The true Israel of God is destined for dominion over a redeemed and recreated Eden (cf. Rom. 8:18-25; Heb. 2:5-9; II Pet. 3:13). Israel must remember that and repent of idolatry!

v. 24-28 FAITHFULNESS IS IN JEHOVAH: Another aspect of Jehovah's nature Israel is to *remember* is His absolute faithfulness. He alone is sovereign. He alone knows the future. He alone speaks and it comes to pass. Who dares challenge His claim that He created everything? Who can bring forth evidence to dispute His claim? Job learned a lesson he probably never forgot (Job 38-40) about challenging the sovereign wisdom of God. Many alleged "scientific" explanations of the formation of the universe are posited today but they are moral evasions, not verifiable scientific demonstrations.

Jehovah demonstrates His omnipotence and omniscience over and over again by frustrating the alleged "signs" of the liars (Heb. *baddim*, feigners, fakers, false prophets). The Lord may expose the false prophet immediately or He may take a long time to do so, but eventually the false prophet is exposed and the Lord's Word is vindicated. Isaiah was one of those prophets of the Lord whose word was confirmed publicly (cf. Isa. 36-38). Jeremiah (Jer. 28:5-17) was another! The list goes on and on. The Lord is still frustrating the fakers and confirming the veracity of His Word today! But this text is directed especially to Israel. She must remind herself of God's omniscience and not listen to the oracles of the idolatrous false-prophets. When God says Jerusalem would be inhabited and the cities of Judah (although many of them had been made desolate by the Assyrian armies) would be built, Isaiah's contemporaries must believe it will surely come to pass. Ultimately, Jehovah is going to confound the wisdom of the wise in His



Suffering Servant. God will use the "Foolishness" of the cross to save those who believe (I Cor. 1:18f). The idea of a crucified Messiah was utterly foreign to the Jewish concept. Isaiah predicted that (Isa. 53:1-9)! Peter confirms the Jewish revulsion at the concept of a dying Messiah (cf. Mt. 16:21-23, etc.). The total absence of any specific reference to a personal, dying Messiah in the Jewish apocrypha confirms this.

The point of these verses is the way in which Jehovah confirms His sovereign will. He confounds and frustrates the vain predictions and philosophies of men and fulfills the predictions of His commissioned prophets. Many said Jehovah's program to redeem mankind and form a redeemed people on earth would not survive. Great empires and powerful emperors opposed it. They overran Jerusalem, tore down His temple and slaughtered His people, but God preserved a remnant through the centuries. Out of that remnant (Jerusalem and Judah) God produced Jesus Christ and His church. No river was "deep" enough to stop God from keeping His promise of redemption. No empire was large enough, cruel enough, rich enough to keep God from preserving those who remained faithful to Him. God was able even to use Cyrus, a pagan ruler of Persia, to "shepherd" His people and send them back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. God used Nebuchadnezzar and many others to fulfill His purposes (cf. our comments in *Daniel*, College Press, chapters 7-12). We will have much more to say of Cyrus in the next chapter.

Israel is to renew its divine destiny as the servant of Jehovah on the basis of Jehovah's faithfulness. Jehovah will keep His promises, and no amount of opposition will stand in His way. As a matter of fact, Jehovah will use His opposition as servants and shepherds to carry out His plan. Israel is more than a conqueror through Him who loves her! The church must daily renew its divine destiny as God's Zion in the world today on the basis of Christ's faithfulness to keep His promises. Let the church focus its preaching on the nature of Christ—who He is and what He promises, and this will build the kingdom of God. Man has many questions, but Jesus cuts through all

## ISAIAH

our irrelevancies and goes to the very heart of our problem when He asks, "Whom do you say that I am?" (Mt. 16:15). For in this question He asks for conviction, confession and commitment to the only thing that matters—the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. Once that is settled, all else falls into proper place.

### QUIZ

1. Why is it important to remember *who* God is?
2. How was Israel's sin blotted out?
3. Why is God able to direct His prophets to predict the future as if it were already accomplished?
4. Why direct the heavens to sing?
5. How does God frustrate the signs of the liars?
6. In what or whom did God ultimately confound the wisdom of the wise?

### SPECIAL STUDY

#### THE TRANSCENDENT GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

John 1:18

by Paul T. Butler

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. THE POSSIBILITY OF GOD REVEALING HIMSELF

A. Once established from Theism (natural revelation) that God exists and that He is the Uncaused, First Cause, with eternal power and deity (Rom. 1:20), the Purposing Designer of the universe—

1. then unless that which He created is greater than He . . . and

2. unless the laws He created are greater than the Lawgiver . . .