

## QUIZ

1. Why is Babylon called a "virgin"?
2. What is meant by calling Babylon the "mistress" of kingdoms?
3. Why may Babylon be judged accountable for knowing that she was headed for judgment by her actions?
4. In what did Babylon place her trust?
5. Describe the fall of Babylon?
6. How did those who had traded with Babylon react to her downfall?

## 4. SOVEREIGN IN WISDOM, CHAPTER 48

## a. PROOF

TEXT: 48:1-8

- 1 Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and 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 nor in righteousness.
- 2 For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; Jehovah of hosts is his name.
- 3 I have declared the former things from of old; yea, they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them: suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.
- 4 Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;
- 5 therefore I have declared it to thee from of old; before it came to pass I showed it thee; lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.
- 6 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.

7 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.

8 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.

### QUERIES

- a. What are the “waters of Judah”?
- b. What are the “former things” Jehovah showed?
- c. What are the “new things” being shown?

### PARAPHRASE

Listen to this, you descendants of Jacob whom I have called Israel, you who are from the royal tribe of Judah and who take their oaths in the name of Jehovah boasting of your relationship to Him; I know that your relationship is not in truth or righteousness! You boast of your citizenship in the holy city of Jehovah and of your dependence upon Him; but do you not realize He is the Lord God Almighty?!

The Lord says to Israel, For centuries I have been proving to you My sovereignty in wisdom by predicting what would take place; then suddenly I brought it to pass. I knew beforehand that you would be stubborn and unbending and hard-headed. And so I predicted your future long ago, telling you through prophets what was going to happen to you before it happened. I had my prophets predict your future centuries in advance so you would realize I am sovereign in wisdom and not the idols of wood and stone you worship. You have seen all My prophecies come true thus far, but you have refused to confess the truth of it, haven't you? Now I am predicting, through My prophets, new revelations—things impossible

for you to know unless I tell you. These are completely new things; nothing like this has taken place in the past. You cannot say of these things, This is no proof of Jehovah's sovereignty—we knew this all along! The reason you never got the message from all My revelations, both present and past, is you deliberately chose to close your ears to My word. I know you, Israel, you have been treacherous and rebellious from the days you became a nation!

### COMMENTS

v. 1-5 PERSEVERANCE OF JEHOVAH: God addresses the people of Isaiah's day sternly. *Shama* ("hear") means to heed and obey. It appears they call themselves "Israel" but God addresses them as "house of Jacob." Whether there is an intended sarcasm on the part of Jehovah or not is not easy to determine. Certainly God permitted writers of the Bible to employ sarcasm in their attempts to call men to repentance. We have discussed the difference between the terms Jacob and Israel earlier. "Coming forth out of the waters of Judah" simply means the audience of Isaiah's writing are the people of the southern kingdom whose main source is Judah (see Deut. 33:28; Psa. 68:26 for similar phraseology). The main point in citing the three names (Jacob, Israel and Judah) is to emphasize their culpability for not trusting the message Isaiah is giving them about captivity, Cyrus' future return of the exiles and the messianic destiny in their future. These are people of Jehovah—they are His specially graced people, but they do not "hear." They "make mention" of Jehovah but not in truth or righteousness. To acknowledge the name of God in truth means to hear and obey what God has revealed for man to obey. Whoever says "I know Him" but does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him (cf. I Jn. 2:3-6). They worshipped Jehovah with lip-service but their hearts were far from Him (cf. Isa. 29:13-14). They boasted of their citizenship in the "holy" city (where the temple of Jehovah was located)

and they glibly declared their allegiance to Jehovah but it did not seem to register on their minds that He Is Jehovah-Zev'oth (*zev'oth* is Hebrew for "armies, hosts, myriads" and is also used for "war, battle, etc."). In other words, Jehovah is Lord of all! He is Lord of earth and heaven. He is Lord of the inward man as well as the outward man. He knows everything created everything and commands everything.

Judah should have acknowledged His lordship with their hearts as well as their lips for Jehovah had proven His sovereignty in centuries past by predicting (through the mouths of His messengers) the events of Judah's history long before they came to pass. Jehovah also demonstrated through His prophets that He knew the hidden, secret thoughts of men (e.g., Nathan and David). The nation and individuals often knew years and centuries in advance of the coming of minutely-detailed events. Many of these events came to pass *suddenly* without any gradual development or advanced signals. Two needs of the Hebrew people are the motivation prompting Jehovah to predict their future; (a) their obstinacy and hard-headedness toward His sovereignty must be broken; (b) they must acknowledge once and for all that idols are not gods—there is only One God, Jehovah. This indicates that God's primary purpose in predicting the future is not simply to satisfy the curiosity of man about tomorrow. No theology should be built on eschatology! Our theology should be built on the character of the One who knows about tomorrow, not on when and what tomorrow will bring. The only reason God foretells the future is to demonstrate His sovereignty! That is the point! Once man surrenders to His omnipotence and omniscience he does not need to know the future (cf. Mt. 6:25-34; Acts 1:7). Prophecy fulfilled is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The end is to believe God's revelation of Himself and to accept His written word from the hands of the writers as being validated (cf. II Pet. 1:16-21, etc.).

V. 6-8. PERVERSITY OF JUDAH: The onus is put squarely upon the perverse people of Judah. "You have had opportunities to know all these past predictions and their fulfillments;

I remind you to study them again," would be Jehovah's challenge to Judah. The question of verse six is undoubtedly rhetorical: "And you, you will not declare it, will you?" or, "And you, how can you not declare it?" The meaning is that what the Lord predicted came to pass and they must acknowledge the factuality of it even if they do not obey the moral implications of it! This shows that unbelief is a moral problem, not an evidential one!

But now, the Lord is predicting *new* things (things that will have their fulfillment yet in the future). Among these things (so incredible for Judah to accept) were the captivities, release from captivity by a pagan ruler and a coming Messiah who is bringing a way of salvation which is absolutely foreign to their present dispensation. Salvation by grace, through faith in the substitutionary atonement of the Messiah (Isa. 53, et al.) had to be by *revelation*—it had to be a "new" prediction because it could never have been "thought-up" by the human mind (cf. I Cor. 1:18—2:16). This plan of salvation was "created" by God and worked out in His sovereign plans (cf. Rom. 9, 10, 11) as a "mystery to be revealed" (cf. Eph. 1:3-10, etc.). God predicted it all and typified it all in the Old Testament dispensation, to be sure (cf. Rom. 3:21-22; see special study, "The Righteousness of God As Revealed by The Prophets," page 282), but it was dim and abstruse (cf. Heb. 1:1). The Lord predicts and rules in history toward His goal of redemption. He *reveals* His will and plan for man; He reveals Himself (His own person, nature, character—even in the flesh!). Man cannot know God's plan or God's nature until God *reveals* it. Man may not even be able to understand it all when it is *revealed*. But God revealed enough of it in *human language* (which is human experience) (cf. I Cor. 2:13) and in *human flesh* (Jesus Christ; cf. Jn. 1:1-18; I Jn. 1:1-4, etc.) that man can *know* His will for salvation and *obey* His will for salvation.

In verse eight we have the reason God chose to hide these "new" things from Judah until He was ready to *reveal* them. The Hebrew syntax would indicate the latter half of the verse

should read literally: "dealing treacherously you would deal treacherously. . . ." God did not let them know—He did not "open their ear" to these new things because of their perversity. They were spiritually unprepared to hear them. He had yet to put them through a long period of "indignation" (the captivities, the return from exile, the centuries of the Greek-Seleucid oppression and the Roman oppression) before the "new" dispensation could come and be accepted. This verse definitely teaches the sovereign wisdom of God in a *gradual* revelation from Old Testament times to the New. There were things Jesus could not reveal to the twelve until after He had "gone away" because they were unable to "bear" them while He was with them in the flesh (cf. Jn. 16:1-15). Fleshly-mindedness prohibits man from listening to God's word even when it is being spoken and revealed (cf. I Cor. 2:6; 3:1-4; Heb. 5:11-14, etc.). It was difficult for the apostle Peter to accept the revelation of Christ about His atoning death (cf. Mt. 16:21-23) because Peter simply *refused* to accept the concept of a dying Messiah! So, Isaiah says, until Judah stops its rebellion against Jehovah's sovereignty, she is not going to "hear" the "new" things Jehovah wants to reveal.

### QUIZ

1. What is Isaiah's point in mentioning the three names of the covenant people?
2. Why must one obey the commandments of God to say "I know Him"?
3. What two needs of the people prompted the Lord to reveal their future?
4. Why should a theology not be built on an eschatological system?
5. Has God revealed enough of His will to man?
6. Why do most men not know God?

## b. PERSPECTIVE

TEXT: 48:9-16

- 9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.
- 10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.
- 11 For mine own sake, for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be profaned? and my glory will I not give to another.
- 12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called: I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.
- 13 Yea, my hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spread out the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.
- 14 Assemble yourselves, all ye, and hear; who among them hath declared these things? He whom Jehovah loveth shall perform his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.
- 15 I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him; I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.
- 16 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.

## QUERIES

- a. Why would God stop His anger for His own sake?
- b. Does God love Cyrus (the one who shall perform God's pleasure on Babylon)?
- c. Who is the "me" whom the Lord Jehovah has "sent"? (v. 16)

## PARAPHRASE

In order that the faithfulness and mercifulness of My nature may be manifested and praised I am putting a muzzle on My anger and I will not utterly destroy you, Judah. I have put you to the test in the furnace of affliction, like silver is refined, but I have found no silver in you. Therefore, I want you to know that what I am going to do in redeeming you, this "new thing" I am predicting, is not because you deserve it but because I do not intend for My name to be dishonored. The inviolability of My name is of supreme importance to all men lest they think My absolute sovereignty and glory can belong to another. Listen to Me My chosen people, Israel. I am the Absolute God; I am the only God there is—first, last, and always. I created the earth and the heavens; they are at My command and when I command, they obey! Get yourselves together, Israel, and decide this; which of the heathen gods has predicted or is able to command the future like I am commanding Cyrus now before he is even born!? Jehovah has chosen Cyrus as the object of His pleasure to execute Jehovah's will upon Babylon; yes, it shall be the arm of Cyrus descending upon the Chaldeans on My behalf. I, the Absolute Sovereign of all creation, have spoken; I have determined that it shall be Cyrus; I will support him in My work, and nothing shall keep him from doing My purpose. Draw near to Me and pay close attention to what I am telling you: From the time I began speaking to man My will has always been clearly made known and not secret like the heathen oracles; My sovereign will has been present in everything that has happened to you and it will continue to be present in what is going to happen through Cyrus—even to the coming of the "new" things of the messianic age. Now, I the Suffering Servant, tell you, Israel, the Lord Jehovah sends Me along with His Holy Spirit.



## COMMENTS

v. 9-11 JEHOVAH'S GOODNESS: What Jehovah is doing with Judah (Israel), He is doing because of His goodness not theirs. To keep His own absolute goodness and faithfulness and mercifulness inviolate He will act to redeem them from captivity. That which motivates Jehovah is His own graciousness—Judah does not merit redemption. The Hebrew word *'ekhetam* is translated *refrain* but literally means *muzzle*; it is the same Hebrew word used in Deut. 25:4 concerning the muzzling of an ox when treading out the grain. Jehovah decides by His own sovereign grace to muzzle Himself and not utterly destroy His covenant people. The Lord chose His people "in the furnace of affliction." Israel was in the Egyptian "furnace" when first chosen. Then the Lord submitted them to a "refining" process through the wilderness, the period of the judges, the period of the monarchy and the divided kingdoms, to see if there was any "silver" in them. He found none! As good as some of the faithful (like Isaiah, Hezekiah, and some others) remnant may have been, put to the refinement of Jehovah none deserved the approbation, "silver." Jeremiah was instructed to find *one* righteous man in Jerusalem, if he could (Jer. 5:1f). If God refined your community in His crucible today He would not find *one* righteous man who deserved redemption—no man (except the Man, Very Man, Jesus Christ) deserves redemption. All have sinned and come short of the demand of God. But the Good News is that Jesus Christ did come in the flesh, earned absolute righteousness in the flesh, died as the substitute-sinner for all mankind and arose from the dead victorious over that penalty and offers the grace of God to every man conditioned upon that man's faith and covenant relationship. The whole point of this passage is that the inviolability of the name of Jehovah is absolutely necessary to the redemption of Judah because there is no other basis upon which Judah may be redeemed! If Jehovah's absolute goodness and mercifulness and faithfulness cannot be trusted, then all is lost! If Jehovah cannot and does not keep His word

He is no better than the impotent gods of the heathen. The redemption of man rests not in the failing, falling inconsistencies of humanness, but in the *never* failing consistency and absolute changelessness of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. If Jehovah's name can be profaned and His glory given to any other then there is no Absolute Being and man must have an Absolute Being. If this be the case, the focus of all prophecy and preaching should be the character of God and His Son. The Good News is Who God Is and what He has done—not who man is and what he must do! The Gospel is preaching the *person* of Christ, not a religious system. Of course, the good news also reveals how man may enter into a covenant with that *Person*. It is by obedient faith, but not of meritorious works lest any man should boast.

v. 12-16 **JEHOVAH'S GREATNESS:** This chapter is a summation of the section discussing the *Power of the Lord's Servant* (ch. 44-48). The power of Jehovah is going to be demonstrated through His servant Cyrus (and ultimately through His Servant the Messiah) in order that His name may be vindicated as Absolute Sovereign. This is necessary that once and for all men may realize there are no other gods. Man must trust his eternal life to Jehovah and His sovereign plans and servants. Jehovah is Creator. He made the earth and heavens. Even inanimate creation is His servant. There is nothing made that is useless—Jehovah created everything and made it to be His servant and do His bidding. All of creation "stands at attention" to serve His purpose (cf. Psa. 119:90-91; I Cor. 3:21-23; Heb. 1:7, 14, etc.).

So all Israel (Judah) is commanded to assemble itself and hear the sovereign challenge of Jehovah about His servant's work. Which of the heathen gods or false prophets has ever told Israel all that Jehovah is now telling her about His redemptive plan, the use of Cyrus, and the coming of the Messiah-Servant? None! They do not because they cannot! They are not gods but pieces of wood and stone. He "whom Jehovah loveth" is undoubtedly referring (in context) to Cyrus. Of course, Jehovah loves Cyrus, but not in the same way He loves

a believer simply because Cyrus (being an unbeliever) will not *allow* God to love him in a covenant relationship. The word *love* (Heb. *aehevo* from *ahav*) here probably means simply that Jehovah has chosen Cyrus to be the object of His care and providence to serve Him in conquering Babylon and freeing the Jewish exiles. At one time Nebuchadnezzar was chosen to be the recipient of the special favor of Jehovah (cf. Jer. 27:5f); at another time Alexander the Great was given dominion (Dan. 7:6f). The emphasis here is not on Cyrus but on the sovereignty of Jehovah. Jehovah has spoken! Jehovah has called Cyrus! Jehovah will bring (sustain) Cyrus and Jehovah shall make Cyrus prosper in what Jehovah wants, but Cyrus will not prosper when Jehovah does not want him to prosper!

The intent of it all is that Judah might see things from *Jehovah's perspective!* This is the whole point of *revelation*; man must see (or understand) what "is" from the perspective of "Who" Made What "Is!" Man must see that all of creation stands at attention and serves the *eternal* purpose of God which is the redemption of creation. The coming captivity of Judah, the coming conquest of Babylon by a Persian emperor yet unborn (Cyrus), the far distant coming of a Messiah-Servant—all must be seen by man, not through human perspective (carnal, limited, temporal), but through divine perspective which is eternal, righteous, true, pure and glorious. God calls Judah, "Come near unto me, and pay close attention" to what I am about to say. However much of His will God has deemed necessary for man to know and obey at any time, God has not been secretive about it. It was never God's business to keep His will as secret as He possibly could. He has always desired to reveal as much of His will as He possibly could. The only hindrance to revelation has been man's spiritual rebellion. God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ is hindered by man's unwillingness to want that revelation. We would *know* His will more fully if we were more willing to *do* His will (Jn. 7:17; 13:17). God spoke plainly and openly through His messengers from the very beginning. Often times He spoke

more plainly than the people wanted Him to speak (cf. Isa. 30:9-11; Amos 9:10-17; Micah 2:6-11, etc.). Jehovah's presence was apparent in every prophecy made by any prophet of His. Now it should be apparent to Judah that Jehovah's presence and will is being expressed in the prophecy concerning Cyrus.

The last half of verse 16 presents a problem for commentators. Keil and Delitzsch say the "me" who is sent by the Lord Jehovah is "the One unequalled servant of Jehovah" (the Messiah); Edward J. Young calls Him "the Servant *par excellence*" (the Messiah); Leupold believes the "me" is the prophet Isaiah. Of course, it is unusual to have such a sudden transition from the speaking of Jehovah directly to the speaking of the Messiah. But it is not altogether unparalleled. Certainly Isaiah 61:1f are the words of the Messiah. It appears that Isaiah ch. 49 is also a dissertation by the Messiah Himself. Keil and Delitzsch cite Zech. 4:9 as another example of such transition. It would appear that the context supports the messianic view. Jehovah has been emphasizing the "new" thing He is going to do as a consequence of Cyrus' return of the exiles. That "new" thing can only be the messianic age. It is therefore altogether appropriate that the "Unequaled" Servant speak here of His commission or sending. In this text is emphasized also the unique companionship of the Spirit the Messiah will have in His mission (cf. Isa. 42:1f; 61:1f). The Suffering Servant (Messiah) did not come alone. The Holy Spirit was with Him; in fact, He was the Holy Spirit in the flesh (cf. Jn. 14:15-17). From this point on (and of chapter 48) more and more emphasis is put on the program of the coming "unequaled" Servant. The work of Cyrus and the restoration of Israel to Palestine was simply a preparatory step for His coming. There is going to have to be centuries of repentance and sanctification in a remnant of Israel in preparation for His coming. Cyrus and the restoration was just the beginning of it all. From verse 16a to 16b the reader has been transported over a span of more than 600 years. But such "telescoping" of history is not unusual in the writings of the prophets (see Shortened Perspective, in *Minor Prophets*, by Butler, pub. College Press, pg. 32;

comments on Joel 2:27-28, pg. 184-188).

Jehovah wants Israel to see her destiny from *His perspective*, not from the limited human perspective. Jehovah knows everything from beginning to end. He created everything. He is absolute Sovereign. When He says His people will be taken captive, released by a pagan emperor (yet unborn), and that His Servant will come to bring them everlasting victory and peace, Israel should "see His day" (cf. Jn. 8:56-59; 12:41; I Pet. 1:10-12) by faith.

### QUIZ

1. What was the basis upon which Jehovah acted to redeem Judah?
2. Why must Jehovah do things for the sake of His name?
3. Why emphasize here that Jehovah is Creator?
4. What hinders man from knowing God's revelation of Himself?
5. Why should man need to see everything from the perspective of divine revelation?
6. Why the transition from Jehovah's speaking to the Servant's speaking in verse 16?

### c. PRACTICE

TEXT: 48:17-22

- 17 Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am Jehovah thy God, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.
- 18 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:
- 19 thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offering of thy bowels like the grains thereof: his name would not be cut

off nor destroyed from before me.

- 20 Go ye forth from Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans; 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.
- 21 And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts; he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.
- 22 There is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the wicked.

### QUERIES

- a. How may peace be like a "river"?
- b. When were they to "go forth from Babylon"?
- c. Why do the wicked not have peace?

### PARAPHRASE

This is what Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel says: I am your covenant-God, Jehovah, who wishes to teach you to help you and who wishes to direct you in the way you should go. If only you had obeyed My commandments. Then you would have had peace in your soul deep, steady, living and ever-flowing just like a river and you would have had a rightness in your soul that was powerful and never exhausted itself, just like an ocean. Your descendants would have been as numerous as the grains of the sand on the seashore and I would not have had to take away your nationhood. Now when the time comes for your release from exile, leave Babylon and everything she stands for; you are going to be freed from that pagan oppressor so leave all her paganism behind and flee! Go, singing about your deliverance so the whole world can hear about it; make sure everyone knows it is Jehovah who has delivered His covenant people. The Lord God will sustain you in your deliverance, you will not need to cling to Babylon

as if you need her. When Jehovah led His people through the deserts in the days of Moses He sustained them. They did not need Egypt to give them water and food. The Lord made water come from a rock for them; He split the rock open and water flowed out. If you will be firm in your commitment to My commandments you will have deliverance, peace and righteousness, but there is no peace for those who are wicked and who are lax about My commandments, says Jehovah.

### COMMENTS

v. 17-19 THE WAY: The Lord God of Israel has made every effort, from Abraham to Isaiah, to lead this people in the only way profitable for them. The Hebrew word *ya'al*, translated *profit*, means literally, *helpful, good, useful*. It is also used as a proper name, *Jael* (see Judges 4:18; 5:6, etc.). Jehovah *teaches* His people in order to *help* them to peace and righteousness. Joel 2:23 speaks of the "teacher unto righteousness" (see our comments, *Minor Prophets*, by Butler, pub. College Press, pg. 180-183). This is the *way* Israel should have gone—the way of peace and righteousness. It is the "ancient" way wherein is goodness and rest (cf. Jer. 6:16). But Israel, of her own free choice, refused to walk in that way. She chose "bypaths" and "stumbled" (cf. Jer. 18:15-17). The *way* of the Lord is in His *commandments*. They called Jehovah "Lord" but did not do what He commanded (cf. Isa. 29:13; Mt. 15:8-9; Lk. 6:46; I Jn. 2:3-6, etc.). If Israel had only obeyed God's commandments (the law of Moses and the revelations of the prophets) she would have had peace and righteousness in abundance (cf. Amos 5:24; Isa. 11:9; 44:4), like a deep, steadily flowing, life-giving *river*. The figure of the river and the sea stands in emphatic contrast to Palestine's hundreds of shallow, wadis which were dry most of the year and ran with water only occasionally, during downpours, and then soon ran dry again. The peace and righteousness Jehovah gives through His *way* (His commandments) is deep, not shallow; it is steady, not

vacillating. It is this because it is imputed, not earned. Man cannot earn peace with God; he may have it as a gift from God by entering into discipleship with Christ (cf. Mt. 11:25-30). This is the peace available to the new, true Israel of God (cf. Gal. 6:11-16) and comes not by legal attainment but by new birth. Discipleship and new birth comes through a willingness to be taught, to be baptized, and to be taught the way of Christ for the rest of one's life (cf. Mt. 28:18-20; Jn. 3:3-5; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12-13; Rom. 6:1-19). If Israel had only listened to Jehovah, He would have made of her a great nation. Of course, of the "seed" (singular) of Abraham, God has made a "great" people (the church) (cf. Gal. 3:6-18). But what great things Israel could have done as a testimony to Jehovah unto the Gentiles long before Christ ever came if she had only walked in His way! God brought His redemption to the world *in spite of* Israel's stubborn disobedience; what could He have done had Israel been a willing, humble, obedient servant! (cf. Rom. 11:15). Had Israel obeyed, God could have had a holy nation as numerous as the grains of sand on a seashore. But she disobeyed. God had to give her up to wars, pestilence, famine and finally complete national oblivion in captivity in order to sanctify for Himself a small remnant for His messianic use. What great good could be done for mankind today if all Israel according to the flesh would obey and become part of Israel according to faith in Christ, the Messiah! Fleshly Israel's disobedience has been a great hindrance to the gospel. The disbelief and disobedience of the majority of the Jews was a constant source of heart-rending pathos to Jesus!

v. 20-22 THE WAYFARER: The way of Jehovah is in His commandments. The wayfarer is not forced to take that way; he is exhorted to choose Jehovah's way by a deliberate exercise of his will which is expressed by both a negative and positive action. First he is to "flee Babylon" and second, he is to "declare" Jehovah's redemption. These verses are prophetic commands anticipating Judah's captivity by Babylon and release by Cyrus. There were strong temptations for many of the Jews to remain in Mesopotamia after the Persian edict restoring



them to their homeland. Many of them did, in fact, remain (cf. Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther). Although most of the Jews retained much of their cultural identity, many of them, influenced by the paganism around them, lost their firm faith in the Scriptures and they produced succeeding generations whose faith was in their past, not in their supernatural messianic future.

The Lord's command, "Go ye forth from Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans . . ." anticipated more than physical escape from captivity. It is also a command to holiness; it is an exhortation to Israel to separate herself from the wickedness of Babylon and from dependence upon Babylon for sustenance. The true meaning of this finds its fulfillment in the exhortation to the true Israel (the church) to flee the paganism of Rome ("Babylon") (cf. Rev. 18:4-5), and not "partake of her sins." Singing of the Lord's redemption is a favorite figure of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 14:7; 24:14; 26:19; 27:2; 35:6, 10; 38:20; 42:11; 44:23; 49:13; 51:11; 52:8-9; 54:1; 55:12; 65:14). It is a song of praise and testimony the wayfarer is to sing. It is a song about what Jehovah has done—not how the wayfarer feels! Modern "gospel" music focuses too much on subjective experiences and feelings. All the exhortations of God are to sing about what God has done objectively and who God is revelationally! It is interesting that the Psalms, written to be sung, are focused on what God has done and who He is. See Psalm 81:13-16 which especially sounds like this passage in Isaiah.

Israel does not need to be afraid to break all ties with Babylon and separate itself unto its messianic destiny. Babylon's material riches and carnality cannot be the source of Israel's security and sustenance. God will keep His promises to sustain them. He kept His covenant with Israel when she separated herself from Egypt. Even when some of the wilderness wayfarers wanted to return to Egypt for security, Jehovah provided them water in the desert. He clave the rock and water gushed out (Ex. 17:1-7; Deut. 8:15). The fundamental essence of Christ's church, according to the New Testament, is its separation from worldliness. Much of the modern-day church, however,

has not "come out of Babylon" but still clings to worldly-attitudes (bigness for bigness sake, spectacularism, subjectivism, manipulation, exploitation) and worldly behavior (wastefulness, sensualness, legalism, show-offishness, shallowness). The church must learn to depend totally on God, not on human programs.

For there is no peace to the wicked. The Hebrew word *resha'iyim* is from the root word *rasha'* and refers mainly to the activity of *wickedness* which is *disquietude, confusion, tossing, restlessness, disturbing*. Keil and Delitzsch say the primary meaning of the root word is, *laxity* and *looseness*. It is to describe those whose inward moral nature is without firmness and therefore in a state of moral confusion and tossing to and fro; moral upheaval (cf. Isa. 57:20-21). Cunning and deceitful men, Paul warns the Ephesian church, would like to bring wickedness into the body of Christ and cause it to be "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine" (cf. Eph. 4:11-16). Many people do not understand that doctrinal vacillation leads to moral confusion. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church (I Cor. 15:33-34) that "evil *homilia* (teaching, sermonizing) corrupts good morals." And this is the precise point of this passage in Isaiah. Israel must walk in the commandments of Jehovah if she is to have peace. True peace is a result of preaching and doing true doctrine.

## QUIZ

1. What "profit" would God's teachings be to Israel?
2. What is God's way?
3. What might have been the result if Israel had been obedient to the commandments of God?
4. Does the exhortation to "Go forth from Babylon" have any application for believers today?
5. Why would the Jews be inclined not to leave Babylon?
6. What is necessary to true peace? Why do the wicked not have it?

## EXAMINATION

## CHAPTERS FORTY-FOUR THROUGH FORTY-EIGHT

## DEFINITION

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

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Jeshurun</i>        | 8. <i>hidest</i> thyself       |
| 2. <i>graven image</i>    | 9. <i>Nebo</i>                 |
| 3. <i>delight</i>         | 10. <i>show yourselves men</i> |
| 4. <i>shut</i> their eyes | 11. <i>virgin</i>              |
| 5. <i>seen</i> the fire   | 12. <i>mistress</i>            |
| 6. <i>liars</i>           | 13. <i>tender, delicate</i>    |
| 7. <i>anointed</i>        | 14. <i>profit</i>              |

## MEMORIZATION

I am Jehovah, and there is \_\_\_\_\_ else; besides me there is no \_\_\_\_\_. I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me; that they may know from the \_\_\_\_\_ of the sun, and from the west, that there is \_\_\_\_\_ besides me; I am Jehovah, and there is none else. I \_\_\_\_\_ light, and \_\_\_\_\_ darkness; I make \_\_\_\_\_, and create \_\_\_\_\_; I am Jehovah that \_\_\_\_\_ all these things. (45:5-7)

For my \_\_\_\_\_ sake I will defer mine anger, and for my \_\_\_\_\_ will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not \_\_\_\_\_. Behold, I have \_\_\_\_\_ thee, but not as silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of \_\_\_\_\_. For mine \_\_\_\_\_ sake, for \_\_\_\_\_ own \_\_\_\_\_, will I do it; for how should my \_\_\_\_\_ be profaned? and my \_\_\_\_\_ I will not give to another. (48:9-11)

## EXPLANATION

1. Explain the stupidity of idol making.
2. Explain how God shuts the eyes of idolaters.
3. Explain how Cyrus could be used of God in redemption.
4. Explain how God proves that idols are not gods.
5. Explain what was "new" about some of Jehovah's predictions.
6. Explain why Jehovah always acts primarily for His own name's sake.

## 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. Would man in our enlightened age be stupid enough to call a "thing" God?
2. Does God's statement that He creates both goodness and calamities apply to modern history?
3. What application may we make of God taking an oath on His own name?
4. Of what value is biblical typology today?
5. Why is the teaching about idolatry so continually relevant to every age of civilization?
6. Is the teaching about listening to false prophets relevant for today?
7. Is there an application concerning the practice of astrology today from the teachings of Isaiah concerning Babylon's astrology?