

## QUIZ

1. Upon what is the future reconciliation of Zion to the Lord predicated?
2. How certain is the Lord's promise of reconciliation toward Zion?
3. What is the sign of that reconciliation?
4. How did God swear an oath of that reconciliation in the New Testament?
5. How does Isaiah speak of the future beauty of new Zion?
6. How will God vindicate and justify and protect the new Zion?

B. WORD OF THE LORD IS BOND AND BOUNDS  
OF COVENANT, CHAPTER 55

1. EVIDENCE

TEXT: 55:1-5

- 1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.
- 2 Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.
- 3 Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.
- 4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples.
- 5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and a nation that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of Jehovah thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

## QUERIES

- a. Why offer water, wine and milk for no money?
- b. What are the "sure mercies of David"?
- c. Who is going to call the unknown nation?

## PARAPHRASE

Attention, Come to the water of life everyone who is thirsting for righteousness; it will be given to you freely. You may obtain refreshment, joy and nourishment and you will need no money because it will come to you by the grace of God. Why do my people spend all their lives trying to buy satisfaction for their souls from that which can never satisfy? Listen to Me and obey My word and you will be filled with goodness and your soul will be satisfied. Pay attention to what I am saying to you, Zion, be obedient, and you shall have eternal life for I am preparing to make an eternal covenant with you which shall prove My faithfulness and fulfill all the promises I made to your forefather, David. Look! I have promised My Servant for a herald of good news to the whole world; He will be the King and the Prophet I promised. And you, Zion, will call to share the kingdom of God with you a people which you formerly considered outside the kingdom of God. Yes, people from Gentile nations will hasten to make themselves members of Zion motivated by the glorious redemption of Jehovah through the Holy One of Israel. That will result in the glory of God being manifested in Zion!

## COMMENTS

v. 1-2 FAVOR: Redemption has been predicted and explained as occurring in the Suffering Servant (ch. 53). The invitation has been extended for participation in that redemption through covenant relationship (ch. 54). Now the bond and bounds of

that covenant relationship is declared to be in the word of Jehovah which is faithful and powerful. All who realize their need of the substance of life are invited to come and receive freely. In Palestine where water-wells were few and far between and where water had to be purchased for money, this would be an exceptionally arresting figure of speech! Water, wine and milk are used throughout the O.T. as figures of spiritual blessings. The same elements are used in the N.T. by Christ and His apostles to portray the blessings of God's grace. The point of these verses is that God's provision of redemption through the Servant shall be by *grace*. Peter makes it plain that the O.T. prophets predicted salvation by grace (I Pet. 1:10-12). Paul's treatise to the Romans declares that justification before God is by faith. Paul, of course, knows that our salvation is by grace (Eph. 2:1-10), but it is faith that gives us access into that grace (Rom. 5:2). And Paul said the O.T. prophets (and the O.T. law) bore witness to salvation by grace through faith (Rom. 3:21-26). Water is figurative for salvation (cf. Isa. 12:3; 35:7; 41:17-18; 49:10; Psa. 42:1; 36:9; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 13:1; 14:8; Jn. 4:7-26; 7:37-38, etc.). Wine is figurative for exhilaration and enjoyment (cf. Isa. 26:6-9, etc.). Milk is figurative for nourishment (cf. Isa. 7:22; 60:16; Joel 3:18; I Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; I Pet. 2:2, etc.). It was not astonishing to the Jews that Jehovah would be gracious to them. What was astonishing to many was that He would grant them mercy without their having earned it. Most of them rationalized that they earned whatever graciousness God would shower upon them. Actually the Law was intended to teach Israel that she could never, by human merit, earn her justification before the Holy One of Israel. Israel should have known from the Law that her salvation rested in the unmerited favor of Jehovah. But Israel for the most part, was too wrapped up in her self-righteousness. She was spending herself, exhausting herself in trying to earn righteousness through keeping laws and traditions. That is a vain quest! Attempting to attain justification before God by human goodness is frustratingly impossible and only compounds the human dilemma of guilt. The only

solution that will satisfy the human soul is faith in the vicarious, substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ. That solution cannot be reasoned out; it cannot be explained by anything within the human experience, because it is supra-human; it is supernatural. It can only be believed. Believed, of course, on the basis of the historical verification and validation of its efficacy by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection is the only fact that makes the cross of Christ (His atoning death) believable! This is predicted in ch. 53 (see our comments there). The exhortation of the prophet here is for Zion (true believers) to focus its attention on the promises of God that they may have salvation by *grace*. All attempts to be saved any other way will fail!

v. 3-5 FIDELITY: Next, the prophet calls upon Zion to give its attention to the promise of Jehovah that He is going to verify His fidelity in a future covenant relationship which will be everlasting. The future covenant will not become obsolete like the old covenant which has a stated termination (cf. Jer. 3:15-18; Jer. 31:31-34, etc.), or fulfillment. The future covenant will be eternal; it will bring into being the "sure mercies of David" (the promise of an eternal king to sit upon David's throne for ever) (cf. II Sam. 7). This is fulfilled, according to the inspired apostle Paul, in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. "What God promised to the fathers . . ." He fulfilled by raising Jesus Christ from the dead and proclaiming through Jesus the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 13:32-40). The atonement is the promise (Isa. 53), and God's *faithfulness* to keep His promise of atonement through Jesus was *verified* once and for all by raising Jesus from the dead! The empirically demonstrated everlasting life of Jesus validates God's non-empirical promise to remove our guilt, if we believe and accept God's covenant terms. The forgiveness of our sins is not *based* on our feelings, but upon empirical verification of the faithfulness and sovereignty of God, the Son. When we acknowledge and trust in that verified faithfulness, then we may have a legitimate experiential *feeling* of guiltlessness.

Inasmuch as the apostle Paul quoted (or paraphrased) Isaiah

55:3 in Acts 13:34, and plainly indicates it was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we must look upon this whole chapter of Isaiah as messianic. Therefore, the "him" of 55:4 is the Messiah (the Servant) who has been given as a "witness to the peoples, a leader and commander to the peoples." The Hebrew word translated *leader* is *nagiyd* which means *prince* and is the same word used in Daniel 9:25-26 (see our comments there). The word *metsaveh* is Hebrew for *commander* and comes from *mitsvah* or *commandment*. Thus the one to be given for a witness to the nations will be a ruler and a commandment-giver (cf. Isa. 54:13). This probably refers to the twofold messianic office of King-Prophet. In Isaiah 53, the Servant makes intercession and thus becomes the Messiah-Priest. Zion must be apprised of the fact that Jehovah's future eternal covenant will be validated by The One who is Prophet-Priest-and-King. Futhermore, Jehovah's covenant will be secured by this One for all peoples!

Since the Servant comes through Zion, she will be given the privilege of "calling" nations she formerly "knew not" in covenant relationship. Nations that "knew not" Zion in covenant relationship shall, when the Prophet-King-Priest comes, "run" to her because Jehovah is who He is and will have verified that His covenant is universal through the work of the Messiah (cf. Isa. 2:3-4; 19:16-25; 45:14; 45:22-25; 49:12; 60:3-6; 66:18; Zech. 8:20-23; Lk. 24:47). It was in the same Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia where Paul quoted Isaiah 55:3 that he also told the recalcitrant Jews that the covenant of the Lord was for the Gentiles to whom he would thenceforth go and preach (Acts 13:42-52).

### QUIZ

1. What is the main point of verses one and two?
2. How do men have access to the grace of God?
3. How much does the O.T. say about the grace of God?
4. What is the only thing that makes the atoning aspect of the

death of Christ believable?

5. How do we know this context points to the Messiah?
6. How did Jehovah establish the faithfulness of His promises?
7. In what sense will Zion call a nation it does not know?

## 2. EXTENT

TEXT: 55:6-13

- 6 Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near:
- 7 let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
- 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah.
- 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- 10 For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
- 11 so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.
- 12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
- 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-trees; and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to Jehovah for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

## QUERIES

- a. Why does Isaiah exhort his audience to seek Jehovah?
- b. Why mention the word of God here?
- c. How do mountains and hills sing?

## PARAPHRASE

Believe what the Lord says about His Servant and His covenant, O Zion, and seek Him in faith while the opportunity to do so is still yours. Those who are rebelliously and wickedly pursuing lives of worldliness, assuming that the Lord's covenant promises are not going to come to pass had better forsake their unbelief and turn back to Jehovah. Trust in the faithfulness of Jehovah is the only source of mercy for the sinner; and that mercy will be abundant. You may not understand all I am saying about My Servant and His covenant of grace, but that is because my thoughts are not completely reducible to human experiences and concepts, says the Lord. My sovereign program and plan of redemption through My Servant and His Covenant is beyond human wisdom. But just as rain and snow falling from heaven have life in themselves and are the source of life for physical vegetation on the earth, so My Word has spiritual life in it. When I promise forgiveness only through My Servant and His covenant it shall be so. My word will produce eternal life through an eternal covenant. Do not think that the imminent captivity of Zion by Babylon is going to stop My promises from coming to pass. Your redemption from captivity by My sovereign purpose will eventuate in an everlasting covenant of joy and peace for Zion. Indeed, even nature itself shall ultimately be redeemed through My sovereign word. When this covenant is fulfilled it will be a sign that will last forever, a reminder of what I, Jehovah, have done.

## COMMENTS

v. 6-7 REPENTANCE: The favor (grace) and the faithfulness (verified in the work of the Servant) of Jehovah's promised everlasting covenant is appropriated through repentance in accordance with the revealed word of God. Great numbers of the people in Isaiah's day were choosing to believe that Jehovah was not, indeed, could not, ever make good on bringing to pass His glorious promises to the fathers. The rich and powerful really did not want God to interfere with their worldliness. They wanted Jehovah to get out of their lives (cf. Isa. 30—31). The prediction of the Suffering Servant (Isa. 52:13—53:12) was unacceptable then as later. So Isaiah's exhortation to Zion is, "Believe what the Lord says about His Servant and His covenant and turn to Him while you still have the opportunity to do so!" Many of them would die in the captivity that was coming. If they did not turn in faith and repentance to the promises of Jehovah of atonement through the Servant, they would die in their sins. Isaiah believed and saw the glory of the Christ (Jn. 12:38). If he could, why couldn't other Jews of his day? Because they chose to pursue a worldly scheme of salvation. They chose to believe in idolatry or alliances with foreign military powers. Isaiah calls upon his people to change their minds and forsake their wicked ways, and to put their confidence in God's promises that He will work out their salvation through His Servant. Before they can claim His promise of pardon, they must make up their minds they want it. They must choose. If they choose to trust God's way of salvation, they may find it in His salvation.

v. 8-11 REVELATION: The sovereign plan of God for the redemption of the world is beyond the experience of man. That God Himself could become incarnate and live a perfect life (without sin in a fleshly body) and then willingly allow Himself to be "made sin" on sinful man's behalf so that man might be given an imputed righteousness which man does not deserve, is incomprehensible to man because man has no experiential base from which to comprehend such an event. The cross is a



stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (cf. I Cor. 1:18—2:15; see also Special Study, "The Wisdom of God," pgs. 309-322). God's plan to redeem man through The Servant and His New Covenant is a challenge to the pride of man who believes he can secure his own salvation by his own wisdom. Therefore, man refuses to accept God's plan because God's plan is beyond man's wisdom. But that is just the point—God's plan is a revelation. Habakkuk had this problem. He could not understand why God would punish the Jews by the Chaldeans. But God told Habakkuk, in effect, "I do not ask, Habakkuk, that you understand it, but that you believe it and accept it!" The apostle Paul quoted from Habakkuk in Romans 1:16-17. The gospel of God cannot be understood by man, it must be simply believed and accepted.

There is, however, a tangible point of contact between the incomprehensible, unsearchable mind of God and the mind of finite man. That is the revealed word of God. If man will believe the word of God and conform his actions to the covenant terms of God's revealed word, he shall have redemption. The word of God is authenticated and validated by supernatural proofs seen by eyewitnesses and transmitted in human language under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God. So faith in the revelation of God is not a subjective leap without an objective basis. And God promises that His word is dynamic—it is *living* (Heb. 4:12-13). His revealed word is the *source* of our spiritual life, (cf. John 6:63; I Pet. 1:22-25; James 1:18, 21, etc.). God's word produces life like the rain and snow produces vegetation. That is one of the evidences upon which we may base our faith in God even though we may not understand His ways. We see His word produce goodness and life. Man believes many things he does not fully understand (electricity, gravity, personality, atomic structure and behavior). Man believes and acts upon those principles because of objective evidence he has seen to establish their reality. So, man can believe and act upon the revealed precepts and principles of God in the Bible, even though he may not understand them.

The point of these words of Isaiah is to encourage the Jews

of his day that covenant relationship to God in the work of the Servant may not be completely comprehensible, but this relationship has as its bond the historical deeds of God for evidence and has as its bounds, the propositional (verbal) revelation of God in human language. Covenant relationship to God is through the Servant according to the precepts of God's written word. Anything less than that is too little; anything more is too much. God has spoken through Isaiah and the other prophets that He is going to fulfill His covenant in the Servant. God's word will accomplish that for which it is sent!

v. 12-13 REJOICING: The graphic picture of the whole creation rejoicing at Zion's redemption in these verses may be hyperbolic description of release from the Babylonian captivity. Contextually, however, it is a figurative description of the rejoicing the whole creation is going to enter into when the whole creation is redeemed through the work of the Servant (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). When that redemption which the Servant accomplished is finally consummated at the creation of a new heavens and new earth there will be cosmic jubilation. Paradise will be restored and the curse which brought thorns and thistles upon the original earth (Gen. 3:17-19) will be removed. It is through the work of the Servant that man's dominion over creation has been *potentially* regained *now* (cf. Heb. 2:5-9). Isaiah, by the Spirit of God, saw all this. No wonder he burst forth into such beautiful hyperbole! All of this shall cause the name of Jehovah to be exalted forever and ever.

### QUIZ

1. How is the favor of God appropriated?
2. Were people of Isaiah's day capable of believing and turning to the promise of atonement through the Servant?
3. Why are God's ways beyond man's comprehension?
4. May we believe something we do not understand?
5. Is belief a "leap in the dark"? Why not?
6. What is the ultimate goal of the rejoicing mentioned in vv. 12-13?