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In the Beginning

Isaiah

Isaiah the prophet was thoroughly devoted to God. He was one of the "holy men of God [who] spake as they were moved by the holy spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). This issue is devoted to the prophecies of this noble servant, aggregated in the book so well known as Isaiah. "His style is simple and sublime; in imagery, intermediate between the poverty of Jeremiah and the exuberance of Ezekiel. The form is mostly that of Hebrew poetical parallelism. Christ and the apostles quote no prophet so frequently." (*A Commentary*, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

We begin with a review of all 66 chapters of this book in the article *Isaiah*. One of the remarkable prophecies is found in chapter 45, which opens by naming Cyrus a chosen vessel to free Israel from Babylonian captivity. This famous person is the subject of *Cyrus, the Lord's Anointed*.

Lessons from Hezekiah considers Isaiah's record of the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, which is prophetic of the coming crisis in Israel as a consequence of Gog's invasion from the north.

The Sarah Covenant Bears Fruit examines Isaiah 54 from which Paul extracted his comments about the covenants in Galatians 4.

Isaiah's prophecies apply to both the first and second advents of Christ; sometimes the same prophecy applies to both. Some examples of this are examined in *My Father's Business*, with an emphasis on Isaiah chapters 42 and 65.

Waves of Blessing in the Book of Isaiah gleans from various chapters in Isaiah a recurring theme of sin, judgment, punishment, recovery, and blessing, wave upon wave, which will finally introduce righteousness throughout the earth.

The verse-by-verse article for this issue, *They Shall Not Hurt*, is a thoughtful examination of Isaiah 65 with special emphasis on how this passage pertains to the first advent of Christ, though it applies also to the second advent.

The final article, *Isaiah and the Ancient Manuscripts*, considers the integrity of the Isaiah text as we have it today.

We trust these various insights will give our readers a greater appreciation for the depth and scope of this prophecy which is the foundation of the prophetic testimony of God's Word.

Isaiah

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. -- Isaiah 1:1

David Rice

Isaiah is one of the longer books of the Bible, exceeding all but Genesis, Psalms, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah contains 66 chapters, as many chapters as there are books in the Bible. There are five distinct parts to the book, three prophetic segments separated by two historical interludes.

1. Chapters 1-6 -- recitation of sins
2. Chapters 7-9 -- conspiracy against Ahaz
3. Chapters 10-35 -- "burdens" and "woes"
4. Chapters 36-39 -- assault on Hezekiah
5. Chapters 40-66 -- return from captivity

In this article we will briefly consider each of these segments in turn, preceded by an overview of Isaiah's life and times.

Isaiah

Isaiah was a prophet of the southern kingdom, Judah, and he had a lengthy ministry during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isaiah 1:1). Tradition says it was he who Paul referred to as "sawn asunder" (Hebrews 11:37), during the reign of Manasseh, which means Isaiah's ministry would have spanned more than five decades.

Isaiah was a contemporary of the northern prophets Jonah, Hosea, and Amos, probably a little younger than they, and contemporary with but senior to Micah and perhaps Joel in the southern kingdom (note the parallel prophecy in Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:1-3).

His wife was a prophetess (Isaiah 8:3), and his children were given names meaningful to the burden of his prophecies -- Shear-jashub, "the remnant shall return," and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "speeding to the spoil, he hasteth to the prey" (Isaiah 7:3; 8:1). These were "for signs and wonders" in Israel. Even Isaiah's clothing of sackcloth probably symbolized the penitence he urged upon Israel, and his loosing from it a sign of coming bondage (Isaiah 20:2). Everything about Isaiah seems devoted to his ministry, and this kind of consecrated faith, applied earnestly in distressing circumstances, is an example of godly devotion even for the New Creation.

Recitation of Sins -- Chapters 1-6

Chapter one opens with stinging rebukes. "Israel ... [is a] sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD ... From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores [from repeated chastenings]: ... Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers ... Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom" (Isaiah 1:3-9).

Though this introduces the book, the circumstances described apply better to the days of Ahaz than of Uzziah and Jotham when Judah was strong. Perhaps chapter one was not the first pronouncement from Isaiah, but composed later as an introduction to the book, with the tragedies of the reign of Ahaz in view. Thus chapter two begins "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem," as though introducing the prophecy following the foreword. In this case the record begins with one of the most famous of Isaiah's prophecies: "In the last days the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains ... out of Zion shall go forth the law ... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

That would be the future. But Isaiah's present was very different. "Thou hast forsaken thy people ... because" they are rich, laden with treasures, and the land "is full of idols" (Isa. 2:6-8).

Chapter three warns: "The LORD of hosts doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah ... the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water" (Isa. 3:1). The mighty men, warriors, judges, prophets, elders, and captains would all suffer this fate (Isa. 3:2-4). Figuratively, women and children would rule them because of their weakness (Isa. 3:12). For the immoralities of the maidens (Isa. 3:16) God would smite them "with a scab," reminiscent of Uzziah's leprosy for his arrogance. When these judgments would fall, such women would seek dignity, seven willing to take the name of one man, even though general poverty required them to provide for themselves (Isaiah 4:1). The "filth of the daughters of Zion" would be purged, through "judgment and by the spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:4).

Chapter 5 introduces the story of the vineyard, symbolizing Israel, which Jesus referred to in Matthew 21:33. The vineyard was unproductive after much care. At last the owner determined to lay it waste, unpruned, untilled, with briars and without water (Isa. 5:1-6). Judea was laid waste by stages, depleted by Assyria and Babylon, and in our Lord's day even more thoroughly by Rome. After recounting various sins Isaiah said "For all this [God's] anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out [in punishments] still" (Isa. 5:25), a phrase oft repeated in this book.

Chapter 6 introduces a remarkable vision given to Isaiah about these approaching judgments. "In the year that king Uzziah died" -- perhaps his leprosy symbolized Israel's sin, and his death the judgments to come -- Isaiah saw a vision of Jehovah "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1). The posts of the door moved and the house was filled with smoke, all portents of awesome judgments at hand. Isaiah's lips were purged with a coal from the altar and he was commanded to preach to the Israelites "until the cities be wasted without inhabitant" (Isa. 6:4-11). Later a promised holy seed would return and sprout again (Isa. 6:13).

Certainly this scene applied in Isaiah's day. John 12:41 indicates it applies also in the Jewish Harvest, and the same symbols are used in revelation of the Gospel Harvest judgments.

Conspiracy against Ahaz -- Chapters 7-9

Ahaz was one of the most wicked kings of Judah, and God punished him severely (2 Chronicles 28:1-8). But he was the seed of David and God would deliver him from a conspiracy by Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria to replace Ahaz with a puppet of their choice. Their motive was to form an alliance of all three kingdoms to oppose Assyria, whose king Tiglath-Pileser (the third) was pushing westward.

Israel and Syria were right to be concerned. In a short time Tiglath-Pileser conquered both

nations, Rezin and Pekah died, and "Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria ... carried away the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh" (1 Chronicles 5:26), in addition to much of the heartland of Samaria, namely Hazor, Galilee, and Naphtali (2 Kings 15:29).

Pekah, who initially ruled in Gilead, east of the Jordan, was a rival of Menahem of Samaria who had paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser (2 Kings 15:20). When Pekah gained power at Samaria, his opposition to Assyria, his former rival's ally, had already been established. He should have appealed to God and heeded Hosea and Amos, but instead plotted the overthrow of Ahaz to force Judah's cooperation.

Ahaz was troubled: "His heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind" (Isaiah 7:2). As he was inspecting his water supply, the prophet Isaiah came to Ahaz with an assurance from God: "Fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of [Pekah] the son of Remaliah ... [their conspiracy] shall not stand" (Isaiah 7:1-7).

As a sign of the coming deliverance Ahaz was told "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel ["God with us"] ... before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good [before about two years of age], the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings [Pekah and Rezin]" (Isaiah 7:14-16).

The sign to Ahaz was fulfilled by a young maiden producing a child in presumably a natural way. But all Christians know that this prophecy also predicted the birth of Jesus by a young virgin in a miraculous way (Matthew 1:23). The episodes were similar in that both involved a regal conspiracy to break the Davidic line -- Pekah in antiquity, and Herod ("the Great") in Jesus' day. By either means God's promise to David would be broken, and probably Satan was the master of both plots.

The balance of chapter seven details the judgment to come shortly upon the conspirators, executed through "the king of Assyria" (Isa. 7:17). This would be the first of a series of punishments. Nine years after the fall of Pekah his successor Hoshea would lose his kingdom to Shalmaneser (the fifth) of Assyria in 723 B.C. (2 Kings 17:3-6). The three year siege of Samaria can be identified in the Assyrian records as years 2, 3, and 4 of Shalmaneser.

Isaiah 7:8 adds an obscure time prophecy, predicting that within 65 years "Ephraim," representing the ten tribes of Israel, would "be broken, that it be not a people." This extends well beyond the collapse of their kingdom in Hoshea's ninth year, and includes the successive Assyrian deportations of northern residents well into the reign of Judah's king Manasseh. There may be a fulfillment in our Lord's day also. From the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., ending the national polity of Israel, until the thorough vanquishing of Israel as a people in the Bar Kochba Rebellion in 135 A.D., was a period of 65 years. The reverse of this occurred in modern times. From the beginning of hostilities in Palestine in 1915, during World War I, until the re-adoption of Jerusalem as the official capital of Israel in 1980, was 65 years as well.

Chapter eight warns that Assyria would sweep through Judah also, "he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings [armies] shall fill the breadth of thy land [Judah]" (Isaiah 8:8). This was fulfilled a few years later in Sennacherib's attack upon Hezekiah (Isaiah chapters 36-39).

Most of Israel and Judah would not respond to Jehovah's chastisements; He would be "a

sanctuary" to the few, but "a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to [the majority of] both the houses of Israel" (Isaiah 8:13, 14), just as Jesus would be later at the first advent. Isaiah and his children were for signs to the wayward Israelites: "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel" (verse 18). These represent Christ and his followers at the first advent (Hebrews 2:13).

In Chapter 9 the early afflictions of Israel by Tiglath-Pileser upon Zebulun and Naphtali, and the more grievous afflictions of Galilee and Gilead would yield to a blessing during the later years of Hezekiah, and "the people that walked in darkness" would see "a great light" -- prophecies which applied also to Israel's later afflictions under the Romans, and the light of Jesus which would appear in the aftermath (Isaiah 9:1,2; Luke 1:79).

Ultimately "the rod of his oppressor" would be broken despite the tumult of battle of the warrior (Isaiah 9:4,5). This introduces the famous prophecy of verses 6 and 7 about Christ: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." Possibly this lovely prophecy had a token fulfillment in the next king, Hezekiah, son of Ahaz. But it can only really be fulfilled in Christ.

"Burdens" and "Woes" -- Chapters 10-35

Chapter 10 begins "Woe" to the unrighteous leaders of Israel, but this denouncement is part of the context from Isa. 9:8 to Isa. 10:4. Beginning with verse five Isaiah prophesies the fall of Assyria, "the rod of mine anger," after God uses it to punish his people, and chapters 11 and 12 advance the prophetic vision to the first advent when Christ would grow as "a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch ... out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1). In his administration there would be righteousness, "the rod of his mouth ... shall slay the wicked," peace will become universal, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea," and the scattered Israelites would be gathered "the second time" (through Isa. 11:11). Israel will be victorious over "the Philistines toward the west ... [and] Edom and Moab and ... Ammon" to the east, suggesting more victories for Israel east of the Jordan still to come (Isa. 11:14).

Chapters 13 to 23 contain a series of "burdens" against various countries: Babylon, Philistia, Moab, Syria and Israel, Cush, Egypt and Cush, Babylon, Dumah and Arabia, Jerusalem, and Tyre. From these we note three specifics:

1. Though Isaiah lived during the Assyrian period, a century before it was apparent Babylon would supersede them, the prophet not only speaks of the later fall of Babylon but specifies that Medes would conquer them (Isaiah 13:17), and likens Babylon to Sodom and Gomorrah (verse 19), a symbolism used also by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 50:40) and Revelation (Revelation 11:8). This helps us to recognize the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah as a picture of the fall of Christendom, and Lot's escape as a picture of the flight of the Great Company at the close of the harvest. The prophetic language of Isaiah 13:10,13 is the predicate for similar language in Matthew 24:29, 2 Peter 3:10, and Revelation 6:12-14.

2. Isaiah 20:1 was given in "the year that Tartan [military commander] came unto Ashdod (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him), and fought against Ashdod [of the Philistines] and took it." Once this text was derided by skeptics who challenged the existence of such a Sargon. Now we

have copious Assyrian annals of his 17-year reign (more than 100 pages), which intervened between Shalmaneser (who took Samaria) and Sennacherib (who besieged Hezekiah). These annals include 12 specific references to Ashdod. Here is the first one: "Azuru, king of Ashdod, plotted in his heart to withhold (his) tribute ... I put an end to his rule ... and setup Ahimitu, his full brother, as king over them ... against Ashdod, his royal city, I advanced in haste" (*Ancient Records of Assyria*, Luckenbill, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 13,14).

3. Isaiah 21:1-10 applies to the present harvest. A watchman announced to the persecuted ones the fall of Babylon and their consequent release, just as the Seventh Messenger of Revelation 3:14 announced the fall of mystic Babylon and the release of the saints. Now is a time to "eat, drink, arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield" of faith (Isa. 21:5) -- pictures of our feasting on spiritual truths.

The next four chapters describe God's judgments (24), his deliverance (25), praise to God for it (26), and the restoration of Israel after the demise of their enemies (27). Isaiah 26:19 contains the first explicit mention of the resurrection: "Your dead will live; their bodies will rise, You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead" (NIV). This may in part be the predicate for Ephesians 5:14, "awake ... arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light," but presumably applies to the kingdom even more fully. Isaiah 27:1 mentions slaying the "dragon that is in the sea" by the "sword" of truth, referring not to the death of Satan after the little season, but his vanquishing as a dragon, ruler of nations, at the close of the Harvest.

Chapters 28 to 35 are "woes" to Ephraim (Isa. 28), Jerusalem (Isa. 29), evil doers (Isa. 29:15-24), those who rely on Egypt (Isa. 30, 31), the Assyrian spoiler (Isa. 33), and Edom (Isa. 34), punctuated with prophecies of Christ and his kingdom (Isa. 32, 35), fulfilled at the two advents of Christ.

Assault on Hezekiah -- Chapters 36-39

These chapters are a second historical interlude about 30 years after that in chapters 7-9. The subject is Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C., the 14th year of Hezekiah and 4th year of Sennacherib. It is widely considered to picture Israel's deliverance by God from the invasion of Gog in Israel's last hour of peril.

There were actually two perils at this time, the Assyrians outside the gates and the mortal sickness of Hezekiah within. We know these troubles were synchronous because God told him, through Isaiah, that he would heal his sickness and "add unto thy days fifteen years, And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria" (Isaiah 38:5, 6). Likewise Israel faces two perils in the last times, Gog from the north, but also the systemic sickness of sin within.

Deliverance from the illness of Hezekiah came through a plaister of figs laid upon his boil, apparently extracting the infection from Hezekiah. Similarly, at the crescendo of Israel's peril, the Ancient Worthies (good figs) will be raised to lead Israel out of sin and heal them. Hezekiah's 15 years of extended life probably represent God's everlasting deliverance of Israel through the seven kings (the Church) and eight princes (Ancient Worthies) who come to their aid (Micah 5:5). The same assistance is pictured in Ezekiel's Temple by the flight of seven steps and eight steps leading to God (Ezekiel 40:26,31).

This deliverance was presaged by turning back a shadow by ten "degrees" or steps, contrary to nature (Isaiah 38:8). Probably this represents the turning back of God's judgment against Israel by their regathering from the "ten horns" or "ten toes," the fragments of the Roman Empire. The turning back of their diaspora, already occurring, presages the coming full deliverance of Israel.

Return from Captivity -- Chapters 40-66

This last segment of Isaiah is the longest, which curiously divides the 66 chapters of Isaiah into 39 and 27, just as the 66 books of the Bible are divided by the Old and New Testaments. This segment is sometimes supposed to be the work of a later author, because of the particularity of the prophecies -- Cyrus is mentioned by name in Isaiah 45:1 -- and mention of the fall of the temple, "our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary," is made in Isaiah 63:18.

But on behalf of the unity of the composition are the following considerations from the NIV's introduction to Isaiah: 1) Isaiah is the only name attached to it (see Isa. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1); 2) The expression "the Holy One of Israel" occurs 12 times in chapters 1-39 and 14 times in 40-66, but rarely (six times) outside of Isaiah; 3) There are at least 25 Hebrew words or forms found in both parts of Isaiah that occur in no other prophetic writing.

Of special note in this section are Isa. 42 about "My servant" Christ, anointed with the spirit (see *My Father's Business*, p. 21), Isa. 54, the source for Paul's thoughts on the Covenants (see *The Sarah Covenant Bears Fruit*, p. 15), Isa. 61, Christ's anointing and ministry (see *Waves of Blessing*, p. 25), and Isa. 65, the peaceful administration of Christ (see *They Shall Not Hurt*, p. 29).

Isa. 40 predicts the ministry of John the Baptist (Isa. 40:3), the advent of Christ (Isa. 40:9), and the gathering of his flock (Isa. 40:11-31). All of these have parallels in our day. Isa. 40:40-44 all have something to do with the introduction of Christ's ministry and the blessing of those in Jacob who would turn to their Messiah.

Chapters 45-48 speak of the fall of Babylon and consequent release of the Jews: "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing ... The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob" (Isaiah 48:20).

Israel, "my servant" (Isaiah 49:3), would be honored, and the one chosen "to bring Jacob again" to God would become "a light [also] to the Gentiles" (Isa. 49:5, 6) when the gospel call was introduced. As a woman cannot "forget her sucking child" (Isa. 49:15), so God would not abandon the Israelites but restore them from Babylon to prepare them for Christ.

But most would not respond: "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man?" Thus Israel would be "sold ... for your iniquities" and their mother (the Law Covenant) "put away ... for your transgressions" (Isaiah 50:1,2). Christ would be rejected, shamed, and spit upon (Isa. 50:6), but would "set [his] face like a flint" to endure the scorn (Isa. 50:7) knowing "God will help me" (Isa. 50:9).

In chapter 51 Israel was urged to "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you" (Isa., 51:2), and receive the "comfort" of the gospel (Isa. 51:3), when the redemption price was paid and "my salvation is gone forth" (Isa. 51:5). As for the old Law age, "the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die" (Isa., 51:6), as many did in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

The pattern of chapters 45-51 is repeated in chapters 52 to 66. Israel is freed from Babylon to prepare for Messiah (Isa. 52), the one smitten and afflicted for us (Isa. 53), the Abrahamic blessings spring forth to the church as a result (Isa. 54), the waters of life issue freely to all who wish them (Isa. 55), the Judgments of God consume the unfaithful residue of Israel (Isa. 56), even as "sons of the stranger," Gentiles, embrace the Gospel call (Isa. 56:6). The transgressions of Israel are itemized (Isa. 57, 58, 59), but nevertheless "the Redeemer shall come to Zion ... to them that turn from transgression in Jacob" in fulfillment of God's covenant to his people (Isa. 59:20,21). Thus will Israel become a light to the nations through the Gospel (later again in the kingdom) (Isa. 60).

When the Lord's ministry begins (Isa. 61:1), the distressed but faithful among Israel will receive the "oil of joy for mourning" (Isa. 61:3), become "trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD" (Isa. 61:3), and "rejoice in their portion" (Isa. 61:7). God will appoint watchmen to announce the blessed news (Isa. 62:6), the rebellious will be trodden in the winepress (Isa. 63:3), and the heavens will be rent with judgment (Isa. 64:1). The gospel will open to the Gentiles and Christ will "be found of them that sought me not" (Isa. 65:1). Christ will appear "to your joy" he assures the faithful, but "they shall be ashamed" who are otherwise (Isa. 66:5), leading to recompense upon the city, temple, and the ungodly (Isa. 66:6), but the birth of a new creation for the godly (Isa. 66:7, 8).

All of these blessings have a parallel fulfillment at the second advent. Then the captivity broken is the Roman diaspora, the blessings are for the kingdom, the Gentiles who seek God through Israel are the entire world, the judgments will be upon Christendom (such as the treading of the winepress), and the transgressors cut off are the disobedient of the world who perish in the little season (Isa. 66:24). With this the visions of the blessed prophet are complete.

Cyrus, the Lord's Anointed **An Exceptional Dynasty**

This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor. -- Isaiah 45:1

Régis Liberda

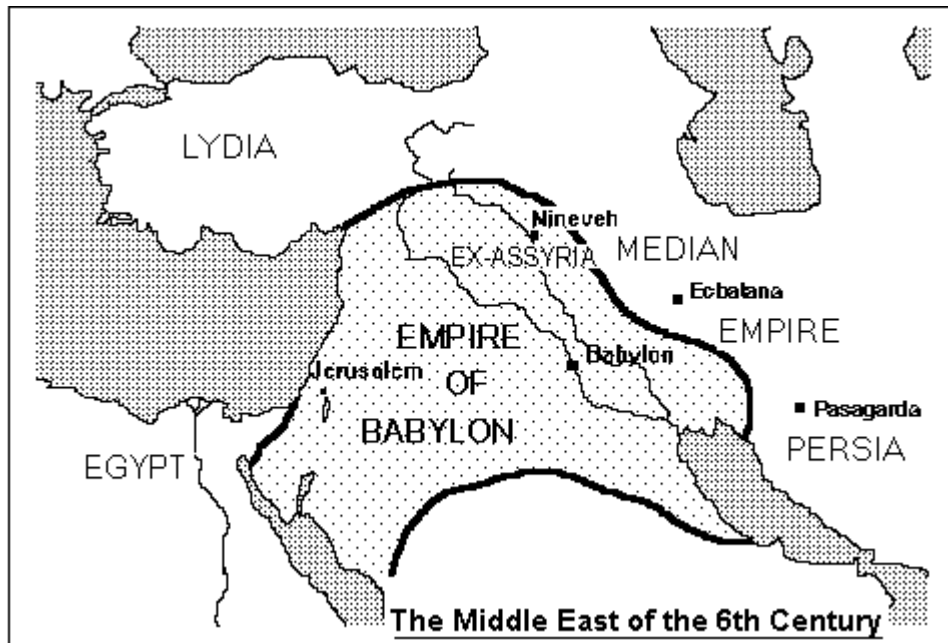
In several places of the Bible words of blessing and praise are expressed by the Lord to those anointed, or favored of God, including great biblical characters of the Old and New Testament such as Abraham, Aaron and his sons, David, Samuel, and the Lord Jesus. The anointed of the Lord are exceptional people.

Yet here in Isaiah 45:1 Cyrus, a pagan king of the Medo-Persians, is called "anointed." The term shows an exceptional appreciation by the Almighty of someone who was not a member of the chosen people.

The Middle East of the Sixth Century B.C.

Who was Cyrus and why did he merit such honor? Back in the days of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah before the captivity in Babylon, we find the world was dominated by kingdoms such as the Greeks and Medes, but especially from Palestine to the Euphrates by Babylon, a colossal empire.

In the tormented history of the sixth century B.C., Babylon oppressed people by extermination or deportation. The Kingdom of Judah suffered such a fate after refusing to pay tax to the king of Babylon.



Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was cruel. He cut the throats of Zedekiah's sons in front of him. Then he put out Zedekiah's eyes so that in his eternal night the vision which remained in his mind would be the murder of his sons. This is a classic example of Babylon's cruelty; domination of the world at that time was by force and brutality.

"I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me" (Isaiah 45:4). During this time, a kingdom east of Babylon began to grow. It was Persia, whose capital was Pasargadae. The king of Persia was Cambyses, who had married Mandana, daughter of Astyages, king of the Medes. The king of Persia was subjected to Astyages to whom he paid tax. When the first son of Cambyses and Mandana was born, Astyages dreamed that this son would be a threat to his throne, so he ordered the child killed. But the boy was saved by the one who was ordered to kill him, secretly nourished and raised by a country woman. This child was the future Cyrus.

Historians say this is the first extraordinary stage in the life of Cyrus. But the Bible says of him, "I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me" (Isaiah 45:5, NIV). As we see in this text, divine providence was already guiding this future king.

At a later time Cyrus returned to the court of Astyages who had in the meantime regretted his behavior. Finally Astyages returned him to his parents, Cambyses and Mandana, and Cyrus grew up at the Persian court.

The Greek author Xenophon says this about him: "Cyrus received from nature a figure of remarkable beauty, a heart full of humanity, was very zealous for science and so impassioned for honor that he endured all works and exposed himself to all dangers." Note Xenophon's words, "a heart full of humanity."

First Victories of Cyrus

At Cambyses' death in 559 B.C., Cyrus was crowned king of Persia. He continued to be subject to Media but began to consolidate his nation and his capital, Pasargadae. He dreamed of an immense empire and worshiped the Persian god Mahura-Mazda. Cyrus did not know the true God, yet according to the Scriptures God had already chosen him. At the time of his crowning Nebuchadnezzar had been dead for three years.

Cyrus' first objective was to gain release from Median influence. In 555 B.C. he went to war against king Astyages, who was his grandfather. The Median army was larger and the fight went badly for Cyrus. The Persian army started to retreat when unexpectedly one of the Median generals defected to Cyrus. Suddenly victory was his.

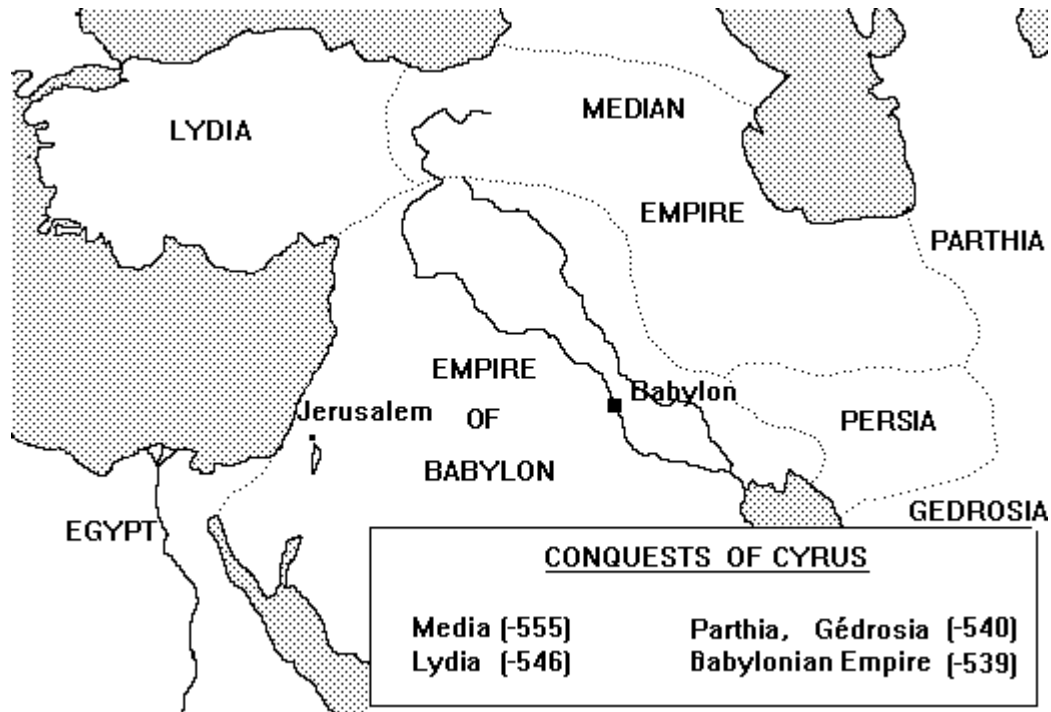
The usual custom after ancient battles was to kill one's enemy, Astyages in this case. Not only did Cyrus not do that but he integrated Astyages into his royal entourage which was an exceptional favor for the time, especially when compared to the cruelty of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Instead of oppressing the Medes, Cyrus gave them more freedom than they had ever had under their own kings. Thus began the glorious prophecy of Isaiah 45:1 (NIV): "This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor."

Cyrus became the head of what was called from then onward the Medo-Persian empire. More than ever he dreamed about conquering the gigantic empire of Babylon, but he knew it was too

soon since the Medo-Persian empire still had many weaknesses.

The Lydian Adventure

Cyrus became concerned about the kingdom of Lydia to the northwest in Asia Minor. That kingdom had an exceptional economic prosperity for the time. Its capital, Sardis, abounded in gold and untold wealth, acquired through the commercial genius of its king. Even today the name of that king stands as a synonym for an extremely wealthy man. His name was Croesus.



In 546 B.C. Croesus made a covenant with the Egyptians, then invaded the Medo-Persian territories, massacring the people. Cyrus went up against him and a terrible battle was waged. Cyrus had two key advantages in this battle: chariots equipped with scythes (which caused terror) and a cavalry mounted on camels (which frightened the Lydian horses because they had never before seen such animals).

The Egyptian allies of Croesus were defeated and subjected themselves to Cyrus. Magnanimous as always, he integrated them into his kingdom. The prophecy of Isaiah 45:14 was fulfilled: "The labor of Egypt ... shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee." Once more divine providence guided the career of Cyrus.

Cyrus realized he must take Sardis, the Lydian capital where Croesus had taken refuge. He laid siege to the city and one night the city was taken. Of course Croesus did not expect any pity from Cyrus, but he was wrong. To his great surprise, he was released. Cyrus in his great wisdom, took him to his own court as his personal financial advisor. History tells us that Croesus remained a faithful friend of Cyrus from that point forward.

Cyrus then appropriated the extraordinary treasure of Sardis, which historians consider the "World Bank" of that time. The prophecy of Isaiah 45:3, "I will give thee the hidden riches of secret places," was literally fulfilled.

The Bird of Prey

For the second time Cyrus had allied a people to himself. Letting his general wage war against the Greek cities of the coast, Cyrus went to the eastern flank of his empire. From 545 to 540 B.C. he made a quick conquest of an enormous area from the Aral Sea to India. Everywhere he went he brought more freedom to the defeated people than they had ever had previously. His sense of mercy, wisdom, and his genius as a governor made him a legend in his own time.

God was with him removing the obstacles in his way as prophesied in Isaiah 45:2, "I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight." But of course Cyrus did not know it was God who was doing this. God said, "From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose" (Isaiah 46:11, NIV). Cyrus was this man called by God from Persia in the east. The prophecy was fulfilled to the letter.

The Fall of Babylon

After he had become the head of an immense empire, Cyrus was ready to challenge Babylon itself. Everything was ready. His army was organized, powerful, and had five years of experience in war. On the other hand Belshazzar, as the successor king of Babylon, reigned over a diminished kingdom compared to Nebuchadnezzar. He had little interest in defending his empire and spent his time adoring his god Marduk, whose worship he imposed on everyone. His subjects felt tyrannized, prohibited from worshiping the gods they preferred. They had no choice but to hope for some kind of liberation.

In 539 B.C. Cyrus and his army crossed the Tigris River and attacked the Babylonian army. He achieved an easy victory because many Babylonians defected to him. But to take Babylon, a city that had been extraordinarily strengthened by Nebuchadnezzar, was another thing. A siege would be long and might never succeed. So Cyrus decided to dig a channel to divert the Euphrates river which flowed under the city.

In Babylon Belshazzar claimed to have enough food to support a ten-year siege. Time passed. To show his Babylonian subjects that the Medo-Persians will become wearied eventually, and also to raise their spirits, he organized a gigantic feast. However, he made a great mistake: they drank from the golden cups taken from the temple of Jerusalem. This was something Nebuchadnezzar never did.

"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting, thy kingdom will be given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5:27,28). This prophecy of Daniel was fulfilled that same night. The Medo-Persians entered the city by walking in the now dry bed of the diverted Euphrates and the king of Babylon was killed. The fall of the greatest empire the world had ever known had a considerable impact. Cyrus was celebrated as a liberator. Happy Babylonians came to him waving palms in their hands.

But in Babylon there was much to do. Entire peoples had been reduced to slavery or had been forcibly deported. True to character, Cyrus once again showed his generosity. This is what he decreed: "I grant to all men freedom to worship their own gods; no one has the right to maltreat

them for that. I order that no house be destroyed and no inhabitant be stripped. I guarantee peace ... peace with all men."

This decree by Cyrus was found engraved on Persian plates. It is so different than the declarations engraved on bas-reliefs by Assyrian and Babylonian kings who proudly drank blood after their massacres.

"I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 45:13). In 538 B.C. the exiled Hebrews in Babylon knew their time of captivity predicted to be 70 years was ending. They saw that in Cyrus the famous "70 years" prophecy of Jeremiah 25:12-14 would be concluded.

This is the edict of Cyrus: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:2,3).

So the prophecies of Isaiah were fulfilled. The forced captivity of the Israelites ended and with this event the mission God had for Cyrus came to an end as well.

The End of the Great King

After the fall of Babylon Cyrus went home to his capital Pasargadae where he constructed new buildings. In 530 B.C. he waged war against the Massagetae (east of the Aral Sea). In 529 B.C. he died in a fight against Tomyris, queen of the Massagetae, and his body was brought to his capital by his son Cambyses (same name as Cyrus' father). Cyrus bequeathed to his successors the greatest known empire up to that time.

Lessons from Hezekiah **Sennacherib's Invasion**

He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. For I will defend this city to save it or mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. -- Isaiah 37:33,35

George Eldridge

The 36th and 37th chapters of Isaiah deal with the invasion of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, during the reign of Hezekiah, and the miraculous deliverance by the hand of God. Many students of the Bible agree that this deliverance in Hezekiah's day is a picture of the deliverance of Israel in the final conflict of the ages. Ezekiel, in chapter 38, calls this episode the attack of Gog, while John, in Revelation 17:14, takes the spiritual view and calls it the war of the ten kings against the Lamb and those with him, who are the called, chosen, and faithful.

Though Isaiah omits the events in Hezekiah's reign leading up to this dramatic event, 2 Kings 18, 19, and 2 Chronicles 29-32 do not, and each of these passages gives important details. Hezekiah was the son of the wicked king Ahaz who had closed the temple, mutilated the vessels therein, and engaged in idolatrous heathen rites (2 Chronicles 28:4).

Hezekiah shared the throne with his father for some years before he ascended to the throne as sole monarch. The condition of the nation must have grieved his righteous heart greatly. In the very month he became sole monarch, he determined to turn the nation to the worship of God. The first thing he did was open the doors of the temple to begin the cleansing work.

The antitypical temple represents the church, the Body of Christ, of which he is the head "and are built upon the foundation of the apostles, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:20,21).

The Political Context

Hezekiah had grown up in a period of great unrest. The surrounding nations were battling one another for control, with Judea in the middle. Assyria wanted control of all western Asia, and its sights were set on Judea as a trophy. It is at this time that Hezekiah opens the doors of the temple. He ordered the priests and the Levites to sanctify themselves and the temple. They did this by disposing of all the unclean heathen rites and their trappings by throwing them into the brook Kidron, the usual place for worthless trash.

The cleansing of the temple from all its uncleanness may be a picture of throwing away and rejecting the Talmud's ridiculous set of laws and all that connected the Jews with their rejection of Christ.

Hezekiah was aware of the capture of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria not many years before his reign began, and so we have this statement from him in 2 Chronicles 29:10: "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us."

The people of Judah had suffered great distress because of their disobedience and apostasy, and Hezekiah desired to turn the nation back to God in total commitment. The priests and Levites began to sanctify themselves on the first day of the first month (Nisan), and on the 16th day they came to Hezekiah and reported that not only the temple, but also the sacred vessels had been returned and sanctified.

Hezekiah rose up early and gathered together the rulers of the city. Going to the temple he brought seven bullocks, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom, for the temple, and for Judah. This was not the day of atonement ordered by the Lord to be kept on the tenth day of the seventh month, but a very special celebration of atonement for all Israel.

This continued with the entire congregation worshipping with songs of praise. Then Hezekiah told the people to bring their sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the Lord. The result was that the people brought so many animals for burnt offerings that the priests could not handle the slaying, so the Levites had to help. The account is in 2 Chronicles 29 and concludes with verse 36: "Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people; for the thing was done suddenly."

Remembering the Assyrian invasion and the miraculous deliverance by God's hand shortly following this "preparing of the people," may suggest that God intends to get his people in the right heart condition to trust him before the final conflict of this age.

Passover Celebration Postponed

2 Chronicles 30 records Hezekiah's declaration to keep the Passover. The correct date for keeping it was Nisan 14, but the temple was not sanctified until Nisan 16. Hezekiah took counsel with his princes and congregation. He declared that the Passover would be kept on the 14th day of the second month. Numbers 9:5-11 states when to keep the Passover: the 14th day of the first month (Nisan). However, it also tells us that certain men were defiled by contact with a dead body and were unclean for seven days. God told Moses these unclean ones could keep it in the second month on the 14th day.

There may be here a remarkable connection of thought. The fact that the priests and Levites had not finished cleansing and sanctifying the temple was not a legal reason for postponing the Passover observance. The legal reason, under the Law, was uncleanness through contact with a dead body. So Israel in the kingdom is "delayed" in receiving the Passover, having rejected Christ at the first advent. But in their rejection they "killed the Prince of life" (Acts 3:15), and thus were defiled with the death of Christ at their instigation.

In Jesus' parable about the householder who planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen, servants were sent to receive the fruits. They took his servants, beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Then he sent his son, saying "they will reverence my son." But they said, "This is the heir, let us kill him and seize his inheritance." The Pharisees knew Jesus was the son and heir, and perceived that Jesus spoke the parable about them (Matthew 21:33-45).

God may have overruled the events back in Hezekiah's day so that when keeping the Passover in the second month, we might have this picture. The people of Israel will have to admit that they came in contact with a dead body and were thereby unclean, postponing their appreciation of the Lamb of God.

2 Chronicles 30:15 says the priests did prepare the Passover on the 14th day of the second month, and the priests and the Levites were "ashamed." This seems to harmonize with Zechariah 12:10, "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced and shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

Many of the people at this great Passover were not sanctified, so the Levites had charge of killing the lambs for everyone not clean. This was also a violation of the law, but Hezekiah prayed to God to pardon every one and God hearkened to Hezekiah and healed the people (held back the penalty). God was willing to overlook the violations for the operation of grace and the healing of Israel. Grace is freely offered to all who seek the Lord, no matter their former status. And the Levites taught the good knowledge of the Lord. Perhaps this shows that Israel will teach the nations the true meaning of the Passover as the Levites did in Hezekiah's day.

Continuing Reformation

After the Passover the people went into the cities and broke all the images, cut down the groves and threw down the high places until they had destroyed them all. All the trappings of idolatry had to go. Antitypically, all that is in opposition to the truth with Christ as the center and hub must go!

2 Chronicles 31:2-11 describes how Hezekiah restored the temple back to its purity. The result was that the nation prospered. This may be a picture of "a people dwelling safely without bars or gates, in a land of unwallled villages which have gotten cattle and goods [wealth], that dwell in the midst of the land" (Ezekiel 38:12). In Hezekiah's day the nations around Judah were seething with war, but Judah and Jerusalem were prospering. This may be a picture of the situation Israel faces just before the attack of Gog, and a reason Gog comes to take a spoil of her wealth.

Events Following the Great Passover

Sennacherib had already captured the northern kingdom and taken the inhabitants captive. Isaiah predicted that this would take place in the days of Ahaz, Hezekiah's father. Isaiah 7:17 tells us that this conquest was directed by God, using the Assyrian as a tool. Isaiah 10:5 repeats this overruling: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation."

The chapter continues with the proud boasting of Sennacherib. Having taken surrounding nations, his sights are now set on Judea. Isaiah 36 begins with Sennacherib's assault and capture of the fenced cities of Judah. He then sent one of his high officials, Rabshakeh, to Jerusalem advising the Jews to surrender, repeating his boast that none of the nations had been able to stand against the might of Assyria.

Hezekiah was deeply troubled and sent for Isaiah, whose closeness to the king has led some commentators to suggest he was of royal blood. Rabbinical tradition claims that he was king Amaziah's nephew. His presence and counsel may represent the Ancient Worthies showing they will be on hand to guide Israel in her time of necessity. Micah 5:5 says, "When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight princes of men [margin]." It would seem appropriate that at least some of the Ancient Worthies will be guiding and directing those in power at the time.

Isaiah said, "Thus shall ye say unto your master [Hezekiah], Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid

of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land" (Isaiah 37:6,7).

This is exactly what happened. Sennacherib was warring with another city, but sent a message to Hezekiah boasting again about all the nations already conquered by him. This time Hezekiah took the letter and went up to the temple and spread it out before the Lord, telling him of all the Assyrians had conquered. He pleaded for deliverance, adding that all the nations of the world will know that "thou art the LORD, even thou only" (Isaiah 37:20).

Isaiah then sent word to Hezekiah that because of his prayer God would intervene. Sennacherib would not come into the city, nor shoot an arrow into it, but would return by the way he came. God would defend the city for his own sake and for the sake of David his servant. Clearly in this reference David pictures Christ.

A Political League Sought

In the meantime, there was a political faction in Judea demanding a league with Egypt (picturing western Christian nations), especially with a view of obtaining chariots and horses (symbols of today's armaments, see Isaiah 31:1-3). Isaiah's indignation at this was hot! He saw that Egypt was too weak and faithless to help. Its faithlessness and disloyalty are shown in the words "and all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When they leaned upon thee, thou brakest and made their loins be at a stand." (Ezekiel 29:6-8).

Here is the description of God's intervention against Sennacherib: "The angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand [185,000]: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (Isaiah 37:36).

This miraculous deliverance is shown also in Ezekiel 38 after Gog comes to take a spoil and a prey: "It shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. Thus will I magnify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD" (Eze. 38:18, 21, 23).

Thus the historical interlude of Isaiah chapters 36 and 37 represents the deliverance of Israel by God from an impending crisis, when God responds to their humble cry of faith, directs them through the Ancient Worthies, and intervenes to vanquish the aggressor. Then "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD" (Micah 5:7) in the morning of the new age -- chastened, repentant, delivered, and ready to spread the blessings of the kingdom to a weary world.

The Sarah Covenant Bears Fruit

Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. -- Isaiah 54:1

This text is cited in Galatians 4:27 in Paul's comparison of the Abrahamic Covenant and the Law Covenant. Paul saw from Isaiah 54 that Sarah represented the covenant given to her husband Abraham about a seed of promise to bless "all the nations of the earth" (Genesis 22:18). Paul's purpose in discussing the subject was to show the brethren that the promised "seed of blessing" would not come through the Law (Hagar), but through the original Abrahamic Covenant (Sarah).

That seed is Christ, Paul said in Galatians 3:16, but it also includes those who are in Christ: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). Paul then concludes, "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. We are not children of the bondwoman [Hagar, the Law], but of the free [Sarah, the Abrahamic]" (Galatians 4:28,31).

Therefore, it was wrong to insist that Gentile believers must keep the particulars of the Law. This was Paul's reason for raising the matter, which was directed to "ye that desire to be under the law" (Galatians 4:21).

Isaiah 54

It is relatively easy to grasp Paul's conclusion, and appreciating his apostolic authority, to accept our liberty from the Law. But to appreciate the details of the issue as Paul did, it is helpful to pursue the train of thought that led Paul to see the allegories he explains in Galatians. Paul tells us the basis by citing Isaiah 54:1 (in Galatians 4:27), applying the barren one to Sarah and "she which hath an husband" to Hagar. The (formerly) barren one was to be more fruitful than the other, just as the Abrahamic Covenant was to be more fruitful than the Law Covenant, even though the latter bore an entire nation of people before the Abrahamic Covenant even began to bear the promised seed with the advent of Christ.

Examining Isaiah 54, one may wonder how Paul knew when to apply the passage. Paul applied it from the advent of Christ forward, but what is the basis for this? One might surmise it is simply because his application seemed to fit, just as a key which opens a lock is evidently the correct key.

There is value to this approach. But there are two other foundation points which help establish the first advent context. 1) This prophecy immediately follows Isaiah 53, which is unmistakably about the advent of Christ. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ... he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows ... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:3-5). 2) Isaiah 54:13, part of the very prophecy Paul is considering, was applied by Jesus himself to his day: "All thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." This is cited in John 6:45, and Jesus comments upon it: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." Though John recorded this late in his life, after the passing of the apostle Paul, no doubt these references of Jesus were circulated among the common body of information current in the early church, thus available to Paul.

The Barren One

Paul applied the barren one of Isaiah 54:1 to Sarah. This is consistent with the greater context of this part of Isaiah, for Isaiah 51:1,2 refer to "Abraham your father, and ... Sarah that bare you." Also, Sarah's barrenness until the age of 90 is renowned. Putting this together, it became apparent to Paul that the prophecy of barren Sarah producing children future from Isaiah's day must refer to the seed of promise, Christ, and his Church.

She was to produce "more" than Hagar (Isaiah 54:1). Because of her promised increase, she was to "enlarge the place of thy tent ... stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations ... lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes" (Isa. 54:2). This does not mean Sarah's descendants, the Israelites, were to outnumber Hagar's descendants, the Ishmaelites (whether or not they did). The key to the great quantity is "thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles" (Isa. 54:3). This began to be fulfilled when the gospel was opened to Gentiles to join the Body of Christ. "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:7,8).

The spiritual classes developed in the Gospel age may number millions. But ultimately the great increase prophesied of the barren woman takes us to the kingdom when the whole world will be children of faith by coming into Christ and thus being blessed through the original covenant made to Abraham.

The "Married Wife"

In this prophecy the "married wife" is contrasted with the barren one, Sarah, and thus evidently refers to Hagar. This is confusing since all know that Sarah was the real wife of Abraham, and Hagar was merely her handmaid. The problem is solved when we recognize the idiom being used. The expression "married wife" comes from one Hebrew word, *baal*, Strong's 1166, "a primitive root, to be master, hence ... to marry." As used of a woman it usually means to have a husband, or lord, *baal*, but in this case designates one who has produced child by a man. (Rotherham footnote: "the husbanded one.")

Genesis 16:3 uses a similar concept: "And Sarai Abram's wife ... gave her [Hagar] to her husband Abram to be his wife," where the last term means to be a child bearer, not to become a wife in the sense we normally use it.

Afflicted Ones

God, through Isaiah, addresses Israel in Isaiah 54. He acknowledges that Israel was forsaken because of her sins, "but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer" (Isaiah 54:7,8). The affliction from which they are gathered is apparently the Babylonian exile. Israel's return from this was mentioned in Isaiah 52:1-12, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence" (Isa. 52:11), and the next prophetic episode is the appearance of Messiah (Isa. 52:13-15) and the blessing of the elect of Israel gathered into Christ at the first advent. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" -- the Israelites who received Messiah and became part of his body (Romans 11:5).

Isaiah 54:11 describes these Israelites as "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," but

promises they would become a new city resplendent with precious jewels: "I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones" (Isa. 54:11,12). The reader will recognize this as the foundation of Revelation's vision of New Jerusalem -- the corporate Christ class -- in Revelation 21:12-21. There the city functions for the benefit of the world. But presently the New Jerusalem of Isaiah's prophecies operates for the blessing of its citizens, spiritual Israel, as the next verse suggests, "all thy children shall be taught of the LORD" -- the very text applied by Jesus to his day, as discussed above.

It is this application of the prophecy which Paul had in mind in Galatians, "Jerusalem which is above ... the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26). The citizens of a city are the "children" of the city, which is their "mother." Thus in Galatians Paul uses two separate pictures regarding the saints: 1) We are children of the Sarah (Abrahamic) covenant; 2) We are citizens (children) of the corporate "Jerusalem" from above, spiritual Jerusalem.

Paul says the two women "are [represent] two covenants," but "answer to [pertain to]" two different Jerusalems. The Hagar covenant pertains to "Jerusalem which now is ... in bondage with her children [Israelites under the Law]," the Sarah covenant pertains to "Jerusalem which is above ... the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:24-26).

"This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD" (Isaiah 54:17). This is the rich favor we may receive, through consecration to God, whether Israelite by birth or grafted into the covenants of Israel through faith.

My Father's Business **First Advent Prophecies of Isaiah**

*And he [Jesus] said unto them [his parents], How is it that ye sought me?
wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? -- Luke 2:49*

Richard E. Evans

Of the prophecies of Isaiah that pertain to the First Advent, two will be addressed in this study. The first concerns the baptism of the man Jesus (Isaiah 42:1; Isa. 53:1-12). The second relates to the quickening of a faithful remnant in Israel (Isaiah 65:2-15).

Baptism of the Man Jesus

Why did Jesus go to John to be baptized? John's baptism was for repentance (Acts 19:4), it was for sinners. Jesus was without sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15). Why, then, did he go to John?

John recognized the apparent inappropriateness of Jesus coming to him and at first refused his request, saying "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" (Matthew 3:14). Jesus answered John: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us [Jesus with God's guidance] to **fulfill all righteousness**" (Matthew 3:15).

The antecedent for the plural first person pronoun included the heavenly Father. Even as a lad, Jesus was fully committed to be about his "Father's business" (Luke 2:49). Throughout his 3 1/2 year ministry Jesus emphasized the work, the "business," he was about was that of his Father. "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth me, believeth not on me, but on him [God] that sent me" (John 12:44). "Believest thou not that I [Jesus] am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (John 14:10).

In Jesus' simple statement "it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," many prophecies were invoked. Righteousness is at the forefront throughout the "Suffering Servant" chapters of Isaiah (Isaiah 42:6,7; 51:5; 56:1; et al.). Jeremiah was even more specific: "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he [Messiah, David's righteous "Branch," verse 5] shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:6).

Though Jesus' words were few, John understood. He acquiesced and performed the immersion. As Jesus came up out of the water the spirit of God descended like a dove "lighting upon him" (Matthew 3:16) and there came a voice from heaven saying "This [Jesus] is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

This heavenly proclamation alludes to a prophecy recorded by Isaiah and is the key that opens the meaning of the First Advent ministry. The voice was a public witness that by his baptism Jesus was the one who will bring about fulfillment.

"Behold my servant, whom I [God] uphold; mine elect [one], in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:1). This verse

introduces the "Suffering Servant" of God -- the "Elect One" (the Hebrew word is singular). The "judgment" this Servant is to bring forth was described earlier by the prophet. "For when thy [God's] judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9).

In subsequent chapters Isaiah foretold of this "Elect One" using vivid detail, particularly in chapter 53. "He [a "man of sorrows," Isa. 53:3] is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa. 53:7). "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Isa. 53:10).

With the testimony of the heavenly voice still in his ear many days after Jesus' baptism, John declared Jesus to be that Lamb of God -- the lamb of Isaiah, the lamb that was an offering for sin. "And I [John the Baptist] saw, and bare record that this [Jesus] is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:34-36).

There is a textual variation of verse 34 supported by a number of important witnesses. It has John testifying: "And I saw, and bare record that this [Jesus] is the ~~Son~~ Elect of God" (John 1:34, *The Greek New Testament*, Aland, Black, et al., 3rd ed., United Bible Societies, 1975, p. 324). This variant corresponds beautifully with the prophet's reference to the "Servant" as God's "Elect One" (Isaiah 42:1). Hence, at the baptism of Jesus a voice from heaven in effect declared: "This is my Servant who shall fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah. As my Elect One he is baptized, not for his own sin, but for the sins of the people."

A baptism for the sins of others is markedly different from that of John. John's baptism was one of repentance, a baptism for one's own sin. Its focus is on self. It is egocentric! Jesus, on the other hand, being without sin, was baptized as the Lamb of God for the sins of others. He was baptized for the benefit of others. His baptism is altruistic! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his ~~life~~ [soul] for his friends" (John 15:13). The Greek word *psyche* (SG5590) refers to the whole of a being, the "soul," not just "life."

Jesus' baptism was the natural outgrowth of his "greater love." As Isaiah had prophesied, Jesus gave "his soul an offering for sin." For the joy "set before him" (Hebrews 12:2), for the privilege of serving his God in fulfilling "all righteousness" by putting away the sin of the human creation, Jesus made a sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26), his "soul." Only love could inspire such a selfless act. Through that love God's human creation will "learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9).

Quickening of a Remnant

To be about his "Father's business" during his First Advent Jesus continually pressed Israel as a nation for repentance. Just as John the Baptist before him, he was fully aware of what was ahead for the nation if it did not repent. "Then said he [John the Baptist] to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Luke 3:7). The "wrath to come" on Israel was the curses of the Mosaic covenant. "But it shall come to pass, if thou [the people of Israel] wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I [Moses] command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee" (Deuteronomy 28:15).

Like Jonah's mission to Nineveh, repentance was the only way to forestall God's cursing (Jonah 3:10). Unlike Nineveh, however, Israel, as a nation, did not repent (Luke 11:29-32).

How could this elect people survive the cursing of their covenant? The prophet Isaiah, while speaking of another time, set forth a precept that provided the answer. "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we [the people of Israel] should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah" (Isaiah 1:9). This precept was confirmed by many of Israel's prophets (Jeremiah 23:3; Ezekiel 14:22; Joel 2:32; Micah 5:7; et al.). So, by God's grace, an important part of Jesus' First Advent ministry had to be the quickening of a faithful Jewish remnant. In this context "remnant" refers to Jews faithful to God and his covenant. These faithful ones must not be confused with those who are baptized into Christ. Such ones die as Jews and become New Creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). They are Sons of God, not Jacob (Galatians 3:28; 1 John 3:2).

Using the imagery of a vineyard with one cluster of grapes that produces wine, Isaiah foretold of this First Advent "business" the Father ordered for Jesus. "I [God] have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people [unfaithful Jews], which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts ... Behold, it is written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense [with the Mosaic curses] ... Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it [the vineyard] not; for a blessing [the wine of the cluster] is in it [the vineyard]: so will I do for my [faithful] servants' [the "good" cluster] sakes, that I may not destroy them all [the whole of the vineyard]" (Isaiah 65:2-8).

Just as Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:20-33), one (Jesus) contends for the vineyard (Israel). God hears, and decrees for the sake of the cluster he will not totally destroy the vineyard. As Isaiah set forth in his precept (Isaiah 1:9), in spite of its cursing Israel was not to be as Sodom or Gomorrah of which nothing was left (Genesis 19:25).

As the prophet continued he revealed this aspect of Jesus' First Advent work in fulfilling "all righteousness," the survival of a faithful Jewish remnant. And I [God] will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains [the Messiah]: and mine elect [ones, the "good" cluster, a faithful remnant] shall inherit it [the vineyard, the earthly kingdom of God], and my [faithful] servants shall dwell there [in the land of Israel]" (Isaiah 65:9). Unlike Isaiah 42:1, the Hebrew word rendered "elect" in verse 9 is plural (Romans 11:5,7,28).

Having addressed the survival of the faithful, the prophecy turns to the destiny of the unfaithful: "Therefore will I [God] number you [the unfaithful Jews, the "rebellious people," verse 2] to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter [the curses that fell on Israel beginning in 70 A.D.]: because when I called [through Jesus' First Advent ministry], ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes [they crucified the Elect One], and did choose that wherein I delighted not" (Isaiah 65:12).

Jesus used this figure of a vineyard in a parable in which the husbandmen kill the heir. Following Isaiah's thought, he prophesied the vineyard, God's future earthly kingdom, will belong to the faithful remnant, not to the unfaithful -- not to those who were Israel's "rulers" at the time. "Verily I say unto you [chief priests and elders, verse 23], That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. Therefore say I [Jesus] unto you [chief priests and elders], The kingdom of God [the earthly kingdom] shall be taken from you [in 70 A.D. Israel's rulers, Sanhedrin, Saducees, scribes, etc., were deposed], and [in the Second Advent] given to a ~~nation~~ [people, the faithful remnant] bringing forth the fruits thereof [the 'good'

cluster]" (Matthew 21:31,43).

The Greek word rendered "nation" is *ethnos* (SG1484) which is used in the singular to denote Jews and in the plural non-Jews (Gentiles). The kingdom to be given to the faithful Jewish remnant (the "good" cluster) is that taken from Israel's "rulers," God's earthly kingdom (the vineyard).

As Isaiah continued his prophecy he foretold of the consequences that would follow the First Advent ministry. "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my [faithful Jewish] servants shall eat, but ye [the unfaithful] shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty ["hunger and thirst for the words of the LORD," Amos 8:11]: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, [in the Second Advent] my [faithful Jewish] servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye [the unfaithful] shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye [plural] shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen [ones, plural]: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee [singular, as a nation, 70 A.D.], and call his [faithful Jewish] servants by another name" (Isaiah 65:13-15).

Apprehending this future for the unfaithful, Jesus, in his response to a Roman centurion's demonstration of faith, gave a paraphrase of Isaiah's prognosis: "And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom [the unfaithful Jews, Luke 16:8] shall be cast out into outer darkness [after the First Advent, Acts 3:26]: there shall be [in the Second Advent, the] weeping and [the] gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:11,12).

In the Greek both "weeping" and "gnashing" have definite articles. These articles indicate, just as Isaiah prophesied, there are to be two separate and distinct reactions when the unfaithful are raised in God's future kingdom. (See *Biblical Greek*, M. Zerwick, p. 59, or other Greek grammar on the use of the definite article with nouns connected by *kai*.) "Ye [the unfaithful] shall cry for sorrow of heart [weeping in remorse, Luke 15:21, Hebrews 12:17], and shall howl for vexation of spirit [gnashing of teeth in anger, Luke 13:28]" (Isaiah 65:14). Which reaction the unfaithful will have will depend upon the heart condition of the individual; however, if in the end they walk up the "way of holiness," they all will enjoy life here on earth (Isaiah 35:8).

So during his First Advent ministry Jesus not only encouraged the faithful remnant, he also challenged the unfaithful. Following Isaiah's lead, he forewarned them of the troubling future that awaited them. "When once the master of the house [the Elect One, Messiah] is risen up [Second Advent], and hath shut to the door, and ye [unfaithful Jews] begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be [the] weeping and [the] gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:25-28). Again, Greek definite articles modify both "weeping" and "gnashing."

In the Second Advent the unfaithful will come to understand the true character of their previous conduct: "Then shall ye [unfaithful Jews] remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations" (Ezekiel 36:31). It will be that understanding that will bring about the shame that will fulfill Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 65:13).

The prophet also spoke of "another name" for the faithful remnant (Isaiah 65:15). The circumstances by which that will occur he set forth in an earlier chapter. "For Zion's sake will I [God] not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof [of the remnant] go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof [the salvation of humankind] as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles [all of fallen humanity] shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou [Israel, as realized in the remnant] shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but [in the Second Advent, when God's favor returns to Israel] thou shalt be called Hephzibah [My Delight], and thy land Beulah [Married]: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married" (Isaiah 62:1-4). With the return of God's favor, Israel as constituted by the faithful remnant will be blessed and "called by a new name." As such it will become an example of the righteousness of God.

Jeremiah also told of "another name" for this divinely favored remnant. "In those days [Second Advent] shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness" (Jeremiah 33:16).

Prophecy Fulfilled

Fully aware of the consequences should Israel fail to repent, during his First Advent ministry Jesus followed the guidance of his Father as provided through the prophet. Esteeming the "good" cluster, he intercedes on behalf of the vineyard. As Isaiah had foretold, he did all he could to strengthen the remnant and prepare it for the "wrath to come." As a result, the time will soon come when Israel will be called by God "My Delight" and the land will be "Married" (Isaiah 62:4). Her name will be "the LORD our righteousness." Then, as anticipated by the prophet, that righteousness will "go forth" to the rest of humanity as a "brightness" (Isaiah 62:1). "Arise [Israel], shine [as the risen moon]; for thy light [thy sun] is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness [the nighttime of sin and death] shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people[s] [fallen humanity]: but the LORD shall arise upon thee [Israel], and his glory shall be seen upon thee [as the sun's glory is seen on the moon]. And the Gentiles [the rest of human creation] shall come to thy light [the divine light as reflected by Israel], and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isaiah 60:1-3).

It will be at that time God's Elect One, the Messiah, will "bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:1). The response of the fallen creation will be such that "Ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the [hem of the] skirt of him that is [a man,] a Jew saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you" (Zechariah 8:23). Though left out by the translators the words added above are present in the Hebrew. Consider the position that must be taken in order to "take hold of the hem of the skirt."

Thus, the simple statement of Jesus to John at the Jordan will be satisfied. By divine grace the presence of the "good" cluster ensured the survival of the vineyard through its time of cursing. Through these faithful Jews as God's earthly kingdom, the Elect One, the "man of sorrows," the "Suffering Servant," will accomplish his "Father's business" and will "fulfill all righteousness" -- "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:9).

Waves of Blessing in the Book of Isaiah

Isaiah 61

They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations ... ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God. -- Isaiah 61:4,6

J. Thompson

The book of Isaiah is a hope-driven look at the sins of Israel, the Babylonian captivity, and the promise of freedom from Babylon and other enemies, when Israel's exiles return to their homeland and to a renewed relationship with God.

Israel's unfaithfulness, judgment, God's faithfulness to his covenant, and the regathering of Israel are recurring themes, and apply on more than one level. They apply to the sins of the Israelites leading to their Babylonian punishment, scattering, and regathering, and they have a longer-range meaning to their Roman punishment, diaspora, regathering, future blessings, and kingdom joys. In both cases the waves of judgment culminate in overwhelming waves of blessing.

There are also important lessons in Isaiah for spiritual Israel, and nominal spiritual Israel, but this article examines the prophecies as they relate to natural Israel. In this respect the prophet Isaiah represents Christ and the church witnessing to and comforting Israel. Cyrus, the deliverer of Israel, represents the Christ in glory as their deliverer. Isaiah 61 will be used as a spring-board to introduce some of the themes of the book.

Layers of Fulfillment

Isaiah 61:1 is an example of how prophecies carry layers of fulfillment. The spirit of God anointed Isaiah to preach the good tidings of Israel's return from captivity in Babylon. In the next layer the spirit of God was upon Christ as he preached to the brokenhearted prisoners of sin who would become his bride (Luke 4:18). The anointed followers of Christ then share in his anointing to preach the gospel and free others who would join the church class. In the ultimate layer, the spirit of God is upon the glorified Christ as they disseminate truth, heal, and bring freedom from sin and death to Israel and the whole human family in the kingdom.

The waves of blessing, one leading to another, are seen also in Revelation 22:17. The receiver of the blessing blesses others, and those who are blessed go on to bless others: "The spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him who heareth [the invitation of the Bride] say, 'Come!' [and spread the invitation to drink of the water of life freely]." Every blessing we receive equips us to share the blessing so that it can be passed on and on and on.

In the ultimate sense the Christ is anointed to proclaim the day of vengeance on Israel's enemies, the day of deliverance of Israel, which is a precursor to the blessing of all the nations. "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come" (Isaiah 63:4). "It is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion" (Isaiah 34:8; 35:1-5). Ripples of righteous judgment flow on and on until they culminate in waves of blessing that wash over all the world.

The result of the blessing of the Christ on Israel will be that the purified remnant of the nation of

Israel will be nurtured by Christ and grow in strength of character to become strong and established in righteousness. They will be part of the rebuilding process of the kingdom, the literal and symbolic rebuilding of cities, and of relationships that have been devastated by sin and evil.

The Blessing Beginning in Israel Spreads to the Nations

"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations" (Isaiah 61:3-4, NIV).

The Israelites will be called "priests of the LORD" (Isaiah 61:6) because they will share the blessings they receive with others so that the people of the nations may also experience a personal relationship with God and Christ through the New Covenant. Imagine the joy as more and more people come into heart harmony with the one who can satisfy the deepest needs and longings of the human heart.

This universal blessing is spoken of in Isaiah 2:2,3 also. In the last days the ruling power of the Christ will be recognized as supreme, "and all nations shall flow unto it." People will realize their need for God and will invite others to "go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob." The teaching and spiritual instruction will flow from Zion and Jerusalem.

Isaiah 11:10 adds that "in that day" Christ on the throne of David, as ruler of Israel, will stand as an inspiration for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest, Israel. Those who join her will be glorious, and "the outcasts of Israel" will be gathered "from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12). Isaiah 19:18 may suggest cities in Egypt, even one known for evil and destruction, will speak Hebrew and swear allegiance to God in spite of their history.

Isaiah 26 says a song of praise will be sung in Israel, and the opportunity to share her covenant and blessing will be open to any nation that seeks righteousness (Isa. 26:1-2). Israel will be enlarged by the increase of its population, and by the influx of nations who join her covenant. It will all be to God's glory (Isa. 26:15).

Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, realizing that God and Christ are the only authority and source of strength. The descendants of Israel, including the nations who join her, will become righteous and rejoicing (Isaiah 45:23-25). All will be invited to satisfy their spiritual thirst and be blessed by "sure mercies" given David, and nations that formerly had no respect for Israel will come to her for a blessing (Isaiah 55:1,3,5).

Isaiah 56 promises "the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the LORD" will be blessed, "for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56:3, 7). A promise is included to the eunuchs, cut off without posterity in the Holocaust or other times of persecution: "I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off" (Isa. 56:5).

Israel will nurture the nations with love and tenderness, as a mother nurtures her child (Isaiah 66:10-14). "In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit" (Isaiah 27:6, NIV).

People Will Voluntarily Support Israel

Other peoples will help in the process of rebuilding and upbuilding. "Aliens will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards" (Isaiah 61:5; 60:10,11, NIV). They will come to Israel still chained in the habit of sin, pay respect to Israel, confess God's care for that nation, and that he is the only God. "Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no [other] God" (Isaiah 45:14).

Foreign nations will support and honor Israel, "kings shall be thy nursing fathers ... they shall bow down to thee" (Isaiah 49:23). Former persecutors will turn to suppliants. "The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending, and ... shall call thee, The city of the LORD" (Isaiah 60:14). The blessing Israel gives to others will be reciprocated (Isaiah 60:10-16), and "they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations" (Isaiah 66:19,20).

Anti-Semitism Destroyed

Instead of humiliation, prejudice, and hatred Israel will experience everlasting joy, and "All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the LORD has blessed" (Isaiah 61:9, NIV). "Although you have been forsaken and hated, with no one traveling through, I will make you the everlasting pride and the joy of all generations" (Isaiah 60:15, NIV).

"He will remove the reproach of his people [anti-Semitism] from all the earth" (Isaiah 25:8, NASB). "The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain [Jerusalem], but Moab [the enemy of Israel] will be trampled under him ... they will spread out their hands in it, as a swimmer spreads out his hands to swim. [But] God will bring down their pride, despite the cleverness of their hands" (Isaiah 25:10,11, NIV). The spirit of reproach will be crushed. Though some will resist honoring Israel, "swimming" away from the will of God, the Lord will penetrate their prejudice and remove their hate.

False Doctrines Removed

In Isaiah 63 Christ glorified is pictured as symbolically treading grapes in a winepress. But the purpose of this treading is not to make wine. The usual process is interrupted and the blood of the grapes is poured upon the earth (Isaiah 63:6). The wine -- the teachings of Edom -- are made ineffective. There is a similar picture in Isaiah 34:4-7; the false sacrifices of Edom (Christendom) are slain and the blood is poured on the land.

The context of Isaiah 63 suggests the treading of the winepress is done on behalf of Israel (of course, on another level the prophecy applies to retribution for sins against spiritual Israel -- Revelation 5:10; Rev. 19:14). Edom was an enemy of Israel, and Satan used the teachings of the nominal systems to undermine both the spiritual and natural seed of blessing.

After the treading of Isaiah 63:1-6, Isaiah records a prayer of praise by the faithful remnant of Israel for deliverance and God's commitment to them despite the nation's history of rebellion. The faithful remnant remember the days of old when God delivered his people through Moses (Isaiah 63:11). They plead for deliverance in the last battle at a time when it appears God has abandoned them: "Look down from heaven ... where is thy zeal and thy strength ... thy mercies ... are they restrained? ... our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary, [but] we are thine" (Isaiah 63:15-19).

The treading of the winepress interrupts the teachings of Christendom. In this debacle the blood symbolically flows upward "to the horse bridles" (Revelation 14:20), which thereafter bring praise to God rather than misrepresentation (Zechariah 14:20, margin). The doctrines of Scripture, misdirected by Christendom, will be redirected in the kingdom. Doctrines such as hell fire, immortality of the soul, "replacement theology" whereby Israel is devoid of the prophetic promises of God, pass away as the credibility of Christendom is shattered. The old doctrines will no longer be imbibed by any.

"The LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause" (Isaiah 34:8, NIV). Following the winepress the teachings of Babylon will be recognized for what they are, and Edom's streams will be turned into pitch (Isaiah 34:9,10). After this the kingdom blessings of Isaiah 35 begin in Israel, as shown by reference to Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon (Isaiah 35:2).

Satan's Rulership Exposed

The former travesty and cruelty of Satan's rulership will be seen for what it really has been -- a temporary permission of evil whose sorrow will fade compared to the kingdom joys. The Lord will give rest from pain, turmoil, and harsh service, in which Satan has enslaved Israel and the nations. In Isaiah 14 Satan is represented as the King of Babylon, "which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression" (Isaiah 14:6, NIV).

But "on the day the LORD gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage ... All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing" (Isaiah 14:3,7). Words of praise to God will come from Israel and the nations, for their deliverance. "O LORD, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will give thanks to Thy name; for Thou hast worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness. For Thou hast made a city into a heap, a fortified city into a ruin ... Therefore a strong people will glorify Thee; cities of ruthless nations will revere Thee ... The song of the ruthless is silenced" (Isaiah 25:1-5, NASB).

All will then recognize that the rule of God and Christ alone deserve honor, and the former governments will never rise again. "Other lords ... have had dominion over us ... They are dead, they shall not live: they are deceased, they shall not rise" (Isaiah 26:13,14).

Isaiah 33:17-22 assures us Israel, and eventually all, will recognize the beauty of Messiah: "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty" (Isa. 33:17). They will ponder the former experiences of terror and see it only as a memory, with no more power to sting or destroy. "Thine heart shall meditate terror ... thou shalt not see a fierce people ... thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation" (Isa. 33:18-20).

Transformation of Heart

This change in rulership and perception will be accompanied by a transformation in the heart of man. Both the animal creation and the animal in the heart of man will be tamed. "He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked ... The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion yearling together, and a little child will lead them" (Isaiah 11:3-6).

There will be no more tendencies to prey upon the weak. People will live in harmony, led by the child-like qualities of gentleness and innocence. God will accomplish what he promised, bringing

joy and peace to Israel and the world. The hurtful thorn bush will be replaced by the beauty of the pine (Isaiah 60:13); briers of neglect (Isaiah 5:6) will be replaced by the fragrant, flourishing vitality of the evergreen myrtle (Isaiah 55:11-13).

A close relationship with God and Christ will create harmony, displacing the former predatory tendencies. Satan's disobedience will never be forgotten: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together ... and dust shall be the serpent's meat" (Isaiah 65:25).

New Life

In Isaiah 61:10,11, Isaiah returns to the first person, as he began the chapter in verses 1 and 2. God equipped Isaiah with the spirit (Isa. 61:1) and with garments of salvation (Isa. 61:10). Both the anointing and the garments equip the greater Isaiah, the Christ, to bring spiritual regeneration to Israel and the world (compare Isa. 61:3 and Isa. 61:11).

Isa. 61:10 expresses the church's joy, clothed "with garments of salvation ... wrapped ... in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (NASB). Her garments identify her as one who has been delivered and will deliver others. These garments are associated with a wedding, and the Bride of Christ will bring new life to Israel and the nations. Isa. 61:11 describes that holy outcome: "As the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations" (NASB).

Other Pictures

Isaiah 6:1-13 shows the holiness of God and our own undone condition, but we are cleansed with a coal from the altar and equipped to carry God's message, to preach regardless of the response. "This [coal] hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away ... go, and tell this people ... until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man" (Isa. 6:7-11).

Isa. 6:10 says the people will be blind, and this blindness for Israel lasts through the diaspora until the holy seed, Christ and his Bride, deliver the faithful remnant, the substance and vitality of Israel. "In it shall be a tenth, and it shall return ... as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them ... so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof" (Isa. 6:13).

In Isaiah 21:6-12 the watchmen represent a spiritual class, equipped with a message for Israel, but also others, during this Gospel age. They report the advance of Christ's "army" and the stages of Babylon's fall, speaking to his threshed and afflicted people Israel. One from Mt. Seir asks how near is the dawn of redemption, and our answer is "deliverance comes, but also judgment."

The Lord will not be silent. He speaks through his "remembrancers," watchmen whom he appointed to speak truth (Isaiah 62:6,7), until Israel is delivered and recognized by the world (Isaiah 62:1-5).

In Isaiah 52:7-10 the message to Israel is that Christ has taken kingly control, and we can joyfully proclaim what we see with our own eyes: the LORD restores Zion, favor has returned to Israel, and the deliverance continues until all nations recognize it.

Our Great Hope

We have a great hope and privilege before us. Waves of blessing have come over us, and we can send out these waves to those who touch our lives, to Israel, and the human family as a witness and comfort now and as a deliverer in the regeneration. May we be in heart harmony with his judgments and with his will to use us as the mouthpiece of both judgment and blessing. The ultimate fulfillment of prophecy will be in a wave of overwhelming blessing for all. Let the waves keep crashing!

They Shall Not Hurt

*"The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the LORD." -
- Isaiah 65:25, NIV*

A verse-by-verse study of Isaiah 65 (by Wade Austin)

God, through the prophet Isaiah, spoke concerning both the development of the spiritual phase of God's kingdom during the Gospel age and the establishment of the earthly phase of his kingdom in the Millennial age. God assured the nation of Israel that he would remain faithful to his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning them as the natural seed. But, because of their unfaithfulness, the heavenly kingdom would be found by and given to "a nation that was not called by my name" (Isaiah 65:1; Romans 10:20).

A thorough study of Isaiah reveals Scriptures that are applicable: 1) to the nation of Israel alone; 2) to the world of mankind through the nation of Israel; and 3) to spiritual Israel (the church). The prophet Isaiah also wrote of essential characteristics and principles of God's kingdom that apply to both natural and spiritual Israel. A verse-by-verse study of Isaiah 65 reveals the intertwined process of God's creative work containing a promise concerning the new creation of the Gospel age, as well as the Millennial age promise to bless Israel and all the families of the earth during God's kingdom of peace.

Gospel Call -- Isaiah 65:1

I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

In this verse God speaks of revealing himself to the seed of faith among the gentiles ("a nation that was not called by my name"). Paul quotes this verse in Romans 10:20,21 as part of his documentation of the grace of God which he eloquently expounded on throughout Romans. Paul argued that Christ was the ultimate demonstration of God's grace and that he put an end to any notion that righteousness could be attained through keeping the law. Those who accept this revelation of God's grace (his unmerited favor) find God by faith and are called by his name.

Paul used the words of both Isaiah and Moses to teach the Jews of his day that God had prophesied of a time when God's grace would be revealed to a seed of faith, and with the advent of Jesus that day had come (Romans 10:18-21). Paul and Barnabas spoke forcefully to the Jews of their day: "When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:44-47, NIV).

Disobedient Rejected -- Isaiah 65:2, 3

I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick.

God informs Israel that he offered his grace to them "all day long" (NIV), but they remained disobedient and obstinate. God describes the specific types of sins of Israel and warns of punishment for them. These sins included rebelliousness, a sinful walk, provoking God, sacrificing in gardens (a reference to idol worship and possibly tree worship), brick incense altars, lodging among graves and monuments (worshipping the dead), eating swine and other forbidden meat, and being self-righteous (specially their spiritual leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees). Finally God says: "Behold, it is written before Me, I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will even repay into their bosom, both their own iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers together, says the LORD. Because they have burned incense on the mountains, and scorned Me on the hills, therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom" (Isaiah 65:6-7, NAS).

Punishment would be inflicted upon them for their fathers' sins and for their own. To "repay into their bosom" means to deposit their sins in the folds of their robes about their breast where they carried their most precious possessions. Modern men carry their valuables in their pockets. Were this the custom with Israel, God would have repaid them in their pockets.

Paul may have captured the thought of this symbolism when he wrote, "Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. ... Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:27-32, NIV).

When one is a slave to his own lusts, how great is that slavery. God in Isaiah informed Israel that if they are consumed by their lusts, by what they hold near and dear to their bosom, he will repay them with more of the same. They will get what they desire together with the fruits of that desire.

Jacob not Destroyed -- Isaiah 65:8-10.

Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

God says he will not destroy Jacob (natural Israel) for his servant's sake. Instead, a seed is to be brought forth and "mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there." Paul refers to these elect servants when he poses and then answers the question, "Did God reject his people? By no means!" (Romans 11:1 NIV). He then clarifies his answer to his rhetorical question with the words, "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace" (Romans 11:5,6, NIV).

Isaiah 65:10-16 contrasts the faithful seed with the unfaithful seed in respect to both their behavior and their rewards. Sharon, a level plain, will be a pastureland for sheep, and Achor, a word that means "trouble," will become a place for herds to lie down. Both pictures imply a time

of dwelling peacefully without fear of enemies. In contrast, verses 11 and 12 again refer to the natural seed that "forgot" God's "holy mountain." "But you who forsake the LORD, who forget and ignore My holy Mount [Zion], who prepare a table for [the Babylonian God of fortune] Gad, and who furnish mixed drinks for [the goddess of destiny] Meni; I will destine you [says the Lord] to the sword, and you shall all bow down to the slaughter; because when I called, you did not answer; when I spoke, you did not listen or obey; but you did what was evil in My eyes; and you chose that in which I did not delight" (Isaiah 65:11,12, Amplified).

Because Israel sacrificed to the God of destiny, God destines that they will fall by the sword, and because they "prepared a table" (i.e., banquet), "you shall bow down to the slaughter." Here "slaughter" (Strong's # SH2876 and related to # SH2873) carries the thought of slaying for a banquet.

Cast-Off Israel -- Isaiah 65:13-15

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name.

The condition of cast-off Israel is being contrasted with that of spiritual Israel. Jesus used similar imagery when he said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matthew 5:6, NIV). This was indeed contrary to the attitude of the natural seed: "Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Romans 10:3, NIV). Likewise we have Jesus' words, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe" (John 6:35,36, NIV).

The "howl for vexation of spirit" (Isa. 65:14) is reminiscent of the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" mentioned in the New Testament. "My servants shall sing for joy of heart" refers to the spiritual seed as servants. Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matthew 21:43, NIV).

The first part of Isaiah 65 closes with the words, "So shall ye leave your name for an oath, to my chosen ones -- So then My Lord Yahweh will slay thee, and his servants will he call by another name: so that he who blesseth himself in the earth will bless himself in the God of faithfulness, and he who sweareth in the earth will swear by the God of faithfulness, because the former troubles have been forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes" (Isaiah 65:15,16, Rotherham).

Rotherham more correctly translates Strong's # SH7621 as "oath" instead of "curse" as it is in the King James. Spiritual Israelites ("my chosen ones") do not go about using Israel as a curse word. Rather, God's servants, his chosen ones, are known by another name, "the sons of God." Israel's name is an oath or covenant to the sons of God that what God has sworn to do he will perform. The apostle Paul explains: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Corinthians 10:11,12, NIV).

In Isa. 65:16, the word translated truth in the King James, and faithfulness in Rotherham, is the word for Amen. That is to say, "the God of Amen." Typically "amen" is used when one confirms

the word of another in the sense, "let it be so." By saying "amen" one affirms an intent to be faithful to the words just spoken or the covenant just entered into. God is a God of his word. He will faithfully perform what he says he will do. He will fulfill his promise to both the natural and the spiritual seeds of Israel.

The "earth" (Isa. 65:16) is not the Law age earth (the natural seed) under the Law age heavens (the Aaronic priesthood administering the Law Covenant). It refers to the Gospel age earth (the spiritual seed) under the Gospel age heavens (Christ, our high priest after the order of Melchisedek and the firstfruit of the promise made to Abraham through Sarah -- see Galatians 3:16-29; Gal. 4:24-31). Isa. 65:16 assures Jews whose eyes are opened and who approach God by faith as a God of faithfulness, that they will be blessed because "I ignore the troubles of the past, I shut mine eyes to them" (Isaiah 65:16, Moffat).

A New Topic? -- Isaiah 65:17

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

Isaiah 65:17-25 form a unified context. Do these verses connect to the subject of verses 16 and preceding, or do they introduce a new thought?

Certainly the picture language of Isaiah 65:17-25 suggests a time of blessing and peace such as has not existed among mankind. Just as certainly, the principles upon which the peaceful conditions there described are founded will be the basis of peace during the Millennial age reign of Christ and his church. Nevertheless the symbolism of "earth" begun in Isa. 65:16 applies not only to mankind in the kingdom, it also applies to God's chosen people (Gospel age earth, the church) with whom he has made a covenant (the Sarah feature of the Abrahamic Covenant) under the Gospel age heaven (Christ, our high priest). Paul used the same symbolism when he wrote, "Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother" (Galatians 4:25-27, NIV).

The similarity of the last phrase of verse 16 and the last phrase of Isa. 65:17 strongly suggests a continuity of the author's message and not a switching of subjects. "The former shall not be remembered nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:16) refers to the Law age heavens and earth (the priesthood administering the Law Covenant and the nation of Israel under that covenant). "For behold me! Creating new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be mentioned, neither shall they come up on the heart" (Isa. 65:17, Rotherham) speaks to the Jews at the beginning of the Gospel age. Then God began to create his new creation and he gave the first opportunity to Jews. "The former shall not be remembered" poetically describes the freedom of all who came into Christ, especially Jews, who would no longer be in bondage to the law because they had died to it through baptism into Christ.

Jerusalem -- Isaiah 65:18, 19

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. (NIV)

Understanding the symbolism of Jerusalem assists the reader to understand the dual application of these and the succeeding verses of this chapter. Research on the name Jerusalem results in some

differences of opinion, but consensus seems to center around "city of peace," with "habitation of peace" and "possession of peace" being alternate versions. Certainly such meanings contribute to the picture painted by the remaining verses of Isaiah 65, and they are equally accurate descriptions of the Gospel age church and the New Jerusalem (the Bride of Christ) that comes down from God out of heaven in the next age (Revelation 21:1-4).

Symbolic Blessings -- Isaiah 65:20 (and onward)

Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. (NIV)

Trying to understand Isaiah 65:20 literally causes great confusion. Picture language is never meant to be understood literally and the whole chapter of Isaiah 65 is filled with such language. This verse, rather than referring to a literal child, man, or "a hundred years," is a collection of idioms conveying the thought that in Jerusalem every person, young and old, will have a full opportunity to come into peaceful harmony with God. This is true of God's sons during this age and it will be true of all mankind in the kingdom. After such a full opportunity, if any one dies, it will be for his own sins in spite of the abundant grace of God.

(Compare the use of the number 100 in Ecclesiastes 6:3 and Eccl. 8:12, "If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years," "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times." 100 is not intended literally in either case.)

Picturesque Description -- Isaiah 65:21-25

And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

These texts continue the picturesque description of Jerusalem, the "habitation of peace" enjoyed by God's children now and assuredly to be enjoyed by all nations of the earth when the King of Peace, Jesus Christ together with his church, reigns in righteousness during the next age.

The Israelites were used to building homes, planting vineyards, and toiling to improve their lives only to have the work of their hands destroyed by invading armies. They yearned for peace but it never lasted because of their unfaithfulness. But the true children of God neither make war nor suffer destructive assault, nor will the resurrected people of the world in the coming kingdom. God hears the prayers of his people now before they call on him and this principle will exist in the kingdom to come. Likewise, former enemies (pictured by the wolf and the lamb, the lion and the ox, and the serpent) will dwell together in harmony and will continue to do so.

"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," proclaims a blessed assurance fully understood now only by those who by faith lay hold upon the promises of the "God of faithfulness." Most assuredly it will be understood by all when "he will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4, NIV).

Isaiah and the Ancient Manuscripts

Well Preserved

James Parkinson

In the fifty-six years since the great Isaiah Scroll was discovered near the Dead Sea, the initial scholarly enthusiasm has subsided, as no great change to Isaiah's message has resulted. Still it has been possible to make a few scroll-supported corrections with greater confidence. So let us consider where the ancient manuscripts and versions have come from, and then what we can learn from them.

The Septuagint

In the third century B.C., about 72 Jewish scholars in Alexandria, Egypt, were funded by Ptolemy II to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into a Greek version called the Septuagint (meaning seventy). A century later, in the time of the Greek/Syrian kings of the Seleucid Dynasty, and their conquest and subjection of Judea, the high priest's office came to be gained by bribing the Syrian king, and even by murdering the legitimate high priest. Thus began the dissension between the Pharisees (including most scribes of the Massoretic Hebrew text of the Old Testament), who refused to accept appointment of God's high priest by a Gentile, and the Sadducees (Zadokites), the wealthier faction headed by the high priest. (The Septuagint, quoted or paraphrased in the New Testament much as the King James Version is quoted even today, appears to have been translated from a text close to that of the later Sadducees, and not from a Massoretic text type.)

Dead Sea Scrolls

When the leaders of the Maccabean revolt against the Syrians deposed the high priest for not supporting the revolt, and substituted one from among their own, a portion of the priesthood and their followers withdrew from the Jewish community altogether and settled in the desert around Qumran, just west of the Dead Sea. From the biblical and commentary scrolls which they hid in their caves, we have today the Dead Sea Scrolls. A few more scrolls were preserved nearby at Wadi-Murabbaat, Nahal Hever, and Masada. The Biblical Scrolls, translated into English, have been published by Martin Abegg, Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (San Francisco, Harper, 1999).

Massoretic

Forty years after the first Passover of Jesus' ministry, the Romans came to Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. The sect of the Sadducees, whose work had centered around the temple, was destroyed with the temple. (Qumran was abandoned within three more years, just before the fall of Masada in 73 A.D.) From that time on, the Massoretic text has held sway.

The Massorettes were charged with faithfully copying the Bible (Old Testament) apparently from the time of Ezra the priest after the fifth-century B.C. return from Babylonian captivity. From the small number of variants between hundreds of Massoretic manuscript copies known today, and yet written up to a thousand years apart, one may infer that the earlier Massorettes had not been any less careful. Thus, the present Massoretic text (apart from the vowels) should be a good representation of the text of the time of Ezra. (Vowels were not added to the text until a thousand years later so, occasionally, there is an ambiguity in reading from the consonants alone.)

The Sopherim, perhaps in the time of Ezra, made around two hundred alterations in the text preserved by the Massoretes, but these changes were recorded by the Massoretes in the margins of their manuscripts.

Aramaic, Vulgate and Others

The Aramaic and Latin-Vulgate versions were translated from the Massoretic text, but later revised in several places by comparison with the Septuagint. Owing to Jewish dissatisfaction with the Septuagint, other Greek translations were made from the Massoretic text, notably by Aquila (tortuously literal), Theodotion (a revised Septuagint), and Symmachus (literary Greek). Later Greek editions of Origen and Lucian are of still less value to us today.

Isaiah Scroll

More than two hundred fragmentary biblical manuscripts were recovered from Qumran's caves, in a race between Arabs and archaeologists (Arabs winning most of the time). Twenty-one manuscripts are from Isaiah; one is virtually complete (1QIsa^a -- where 1 stands for Cave 1, Q stands for Qumran, Isa stands for Isaiah, and ^a stands for the first manuscript catalogued for that book and that site; written likely in the second century B.C., and therefore about the oldest Dead Sea Scroll, it might have even preceded the Septuagint translation of Isaiah).

Although this latter exhibits over a thousand variants from the Massoretic text, most are minor. The most common variant is the inclusion or omission of a single letter, vav (Σ), most-often translated "and." Spelling variants are also common. Isaiah has about 1291 verses, which averages about one variant per verse, no matter how trivial.

In the first ten chapters of Isaiah about 15% of the time the variance of 1QIsa^a are singular (unsupported by any other manuscripts or versions); its variants disagree with the Massoretic text about 90% of the time, and disagree with the Septuagint about 60% of the time. (The Massoretic text and Septuagint agree with each other in about half of these variants.) On the other hand, two Cave-4 manuscripts, 4QIsa^b and 4QIsa^f, agree with the Massoretic text more than half the time; 4QIsa^f agrees with Aramaic and Latin most of the time, but not with the Septuagint. (1QIsa^b, present intermittently from chapter 10 on, usually agrees with the Massoretic text. 4QIsa^c agrees with the Massoretic text in nearly half the variants. Other scrolls are more fragmentary.)

Considering the origin of the Qumran community, one might have expected their scrolls to agree more with the Sadducee texts, and with their presumed-derivative Septuagint, than with the Massoretic text. But it appears Qumran had texts of both types, not infrequently differing with each other, and none being entirely free of scribal mistakes. The hundreds of Massoretic manuscripts are much closer to one another than are the Qumran manuscripts, or even the Greek Septuagint manuscripts.

Best Preserved

It is generally acknowledged that the Greek New Testament is the second-best-preserved book of antiquity; the best-preserved is the Old Testament. Still, some corrections can be made from the manuscripts and versions (translations into other languages). It would appear that the best witnesses to the text of the Old Testament are, in approximately decreasing order, Massoretic

text, Dead Sea Scrolls, Massoretic margin, Septuagint (Greek), Samaritan (Pentateuch only). Secondly, Aramaic (Syriac) and Vulgate (Latin). Thirdly, Aquila, Theodotian, Symmachus (all three Greek), Targums (Aramaic paraphrases), Josephus (a Jewish history).

Isaiah Variants

Some Isaiah variants are listed below, with the better attested reading first, and other readings afterward.

Isaiah 2:2, All nations shall flow unto it / all nations shall flow over it.

Isaiah 19:18, The city of the sun / The city of destruction / The city of righteousness.

Isaiah 26:3, Because he trusteth in thee / because he is in thee.

Isaiah 44:25, And maketh their knowledge wise / and maketh their knowledge foolish.

Isaiah 53:12, He bare the sins of many / he bare the sin of many.

In Isaiah 19:18, if "the city of the destruction" be the correct reading, there would be an apparent play on words between ha **cheres** (the sun) and ha **heres** (the destruction); even the two Hebrew letters, ch (ך) and h (ח), look very much alike.

Conclusion

It is to be concluded that the Massoretic text, Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, Aramaic, and Latin Vulgate all preserve the text of Isaiah well, though none is above at least a few corrections. In particular, 1QIsa^b and the Massoretic text appear excellent.

News & Views

PBI News

PBI Directors Elected

The members of the Pastoral Bible Institute have elected these seven individuals to serve as directors for the next 12 months:

Francis Earl
Len Griehs
Carl Hagensick
Michael Nekora
Andrew Polychronis
George Tabac
Tim Thomassen

World News

Religious

India's Gujarat state is bringing in a new law to stop the practice of religious conversion. Other states in the election cycle are seeing the nationalist movement growing stronger. Dave DeGroot is with Mission India of Grand Rapids. "We're watching the elections very carefully. There is a very strong nationalist Hindu movement that could possibility be moving from one state to another. However, each state has its own complexion; each state is an entity to itself. We have to just take it on a state-to-state basis."

-- *Mission Network News*, 2/28/2003

The ongoing Mideast conflict has created an awkward partnership for American Jewish groups, which are finding some of the staunchest pro-Israel support in the US comes from a vocal group of evangelical Christians. Activists from both communities say Jews and evangelicals are working together more closely than ever with conservative Protestant groups raising funds, lobbying Congress and organizing rallies in support of Israel -- including an increasing number of joint Jewish-Christian events. Some in the Jewish community are uneasy about evangelicals who support Israel but not Judaism. The Southern Baptist Convention, for example, one of Israel's biggest backers, has issued statements specifically targeting Jews for evangelism.

-- *Associated Press*, 1/31/2003

The bones of scores of villagers litter a "killing field" left in the wake of an unprovoked attack by Sudan's militant Islamic regime in which as many as 3,000 unarmed civilians died, according to a team of fact-finders. Dennis Bennett of the relief group Servant's Heart returned from Upper Nile Province where he and his colleagues heard local survivors tell of a massive attack they believe killed between one-third and one-half of the 6,000 people who lived in the villages of Liang, Dengaji, Kawaji and Yawaji. Bennett said the estimate of up to 3,000 dead was made in part by counting survivors who have returned to the villages and those in refugee camps. Backed by Muslim clerics, the National Islamic Front regime in the Arab and Muslim north declared a jihad on the mostly Christian south in 1989. Since 1983, an estimated 2 million people have died from war and related famine. About 5 million have become refugees.

-- *WorldNetDaily*, 2/14/2003

"Martyrdom is a key concept in Islam and Muslims must ignore the enemies' efforts to urge against martyrdom," Iran's spiritual leader Seyed Ali Khamenei said today. "Enemies of Islam today are trying to undermine jihad (holy war) and the virtue of martyrdom," the official Iranian news agency reported Khamenei as saying in Boroujerd, Iran. The Supreme Leader, in his message to the congress, also referred to martyrdom "as the most beautiful of human values," the IRNA agency reported.

-- *The Media Line*, 2/18/2003

Social

The malaria upsurge in parts of Kenya is a result of drastic climate change, according to experts. "Malaria has continued to kill and there is no magic wand yet. The only thing we can do at the moment is to maintain sustainable preventive campaigns and curative regimens," says Ms. Tilson. Although climatic forecasts can indicate possible outbreaks, it is difficult to estimate the severity of the disease, explains Ms. Tilson. In recent years the worst malaria cases have been reported in parts of the Rift Valley and western Kenya, where each epidemic kills several hundreds.

-- *Horizon (Kenya)*, 2/27/2003

Jamaica, the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic are major Caribbean transit routes for South American drugs headed for the United States, while Haiti is a key conduit plagued by corruption, according to the annual U.S. report on the global drug trade released in March. The Caribbean is a major battlefield in America's drug war, along with the U.S.-Mexico border. A failing economy, corruption, a weak police force, and faltering democratic institutions combined to make politically troubled Haiti a key stop for drug runners shipping cocaine to the United States, Canada, and Europe, the report said.

-- *Reuters*, 3/1/2003

Measles, which afflicted most American children with red blotches just two generations ago, is nearing extinction in the United States. Federal health officials logged only 37 measles cases nationwide in 2002. [But] globally measles remains the leading cause of vaccine-preventable deaths among children younger than 5. Thirty million children world-wide contract the virus annually, and 745,000 died from it in 2001 -- half of them in Africa.

-- *Los Angeles Times*, 1/26/2003

The smallest crimes have provoked the most violent deaths in countless villages where the end of Guatemala's 36-year civil war has brought neither law nor order to remote regions most ravaged by the conflict. In January, a screaming mob of 2,000 people grabbed two pickpocket suspects, tied their hands, dragged them to the outskirts of town, drenched them in gasoline and burned them alive. Police officers responding to the violence barely escaped with their lives. It was one of hundreds of lynchings since the peace accords were signed in 1996, officially ending a conflict that claimed 200,000 lives. "We are living through anarchy," said Bishop Alvar Ramazzini of the diocese in San Marcos. "People do not believe in the legal system. Instead, it is the law of the strongest."

-- *New York Times*, 3/8/2003

Civil

Germany and the country's fast-growing Jewish community signed an agreement giving the nation's main Jewish organization the same legal status as the country's main churches. The accord came on the 58th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp. Germany's Jewish population has grown from 15,000 after World War II to 100,000, boosted by immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The accord triples the Central Council of Jews' annual government funding to \$3.2 million, which can be used to finance institutions such as schools.

-- *Los Angeles Times*, 1/28/2003

Complaining that the military's all-volunteer force has left the risks of combat largely to minorities and the poor, who are more likely to join the military for a better job, [Congressman Charles] Rungel [has joined with others] to introduce a bill that would reinstate the draft, which ended 30 years ago. An earlier Defense Department report acknowledges that new recruits come "primarily" from middle- and lower-income families. Says Rungel: "All Americans should be prepared to share the sacrifices of war - even the affluent ones."

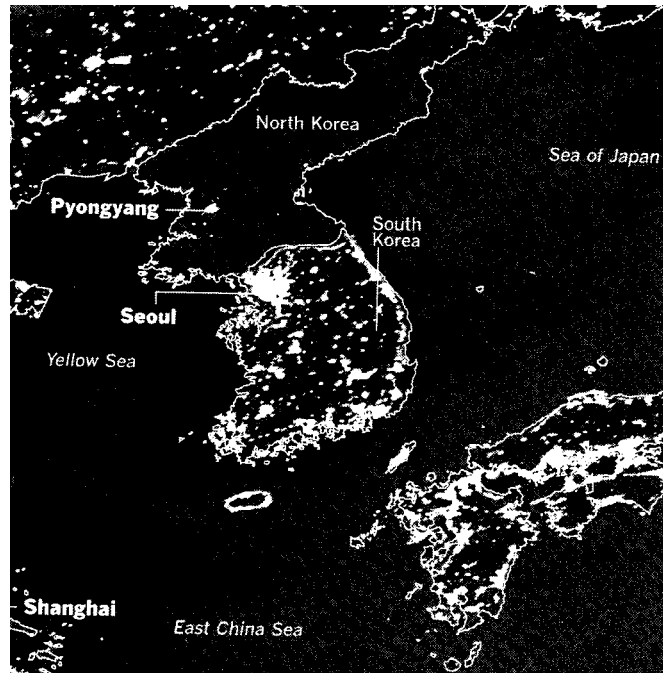
-- *TIME*, 2/17/2003

President Bush may soon face [a nuclear crisis] in Iran. On a visit last month to Tehran, International Atomic Energy Agency director Mohamed ElBaradei announced he had discovered that Iran was constructing a facility to enrich uranium -- a key component of advanced nuclear weapons -- near Natanz. Iran insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes. Israel -- which destroyed an Iraqi nuclear plant in Osirak in a 1981 raid -- is deeply alarmed by the developments. Says an Israeli official, "Iran is a regime that denies Israel's right to exist in any borders and is a principal sponsor of Hezbollah. If that regime were able to achieve a nuclear potential, it would be extremely dangerous."

-- *TIME*, 3/17/2003

Electricity is in such short supply in North Korea that few people can light their homes. Of all the difficulties facing North Korea, the energy shortage is perhaps the most critical. It underlies the crisis over nuclear development and is one of the main factors contributing to chronic famines and the overall dysfunction of the country. "Everything that North Korea has is decrepit, and they don't have the electricity to make spare parts to fix it," said Timothy Savage, who has worked on energy-assistance programs in North Korea.

-- *Los Angeles Times*, 2/1/2003



North Korea restarted a reactor at its main nuclear complex while China stayed away from a United Nations Security Council meeting aimed at condemning North Korea's nuclear program. Tensions on the Korean peninsula rose after the State Department said in October North Korea acknowledged it has a nuclear weapons program. North Korea earlier this week test-fired a short-range missile off its coast and said U.S.-South Korean military exercises next month are aimed at mounting a pre-emptive strike against the country. The U.S. government has said the issue should be solved only through talks among many nations, including Russia, Japan, China, South Korea, and the United Nations, and wants China to use its influence with the North to push it to abandon its weapons program.

-- *Bloomberg News*, 2/27/2003

Financial

On an icy evening in early February, communist-party officials in North Korea issued warnings to local citizens not to try to cross the border into China in search for food. "Don't even think about it," one widow recalls the official telling them. "It's better to die here." The widow and other refugees say life in North Korea, after a brief pickup from 1999 to 2002 is getting grimmer. If food gets scarcer, people are increasingly likely to risk their lives for a decent meal. No one knows how many North Koreans are in China, but estimates by humanitarian groups range from 50,000 to 340,000. "A lot of families are starving," says a 26-year-old woman who crossed the border in December. Reforms designed to revitalize a decrepit economy have instead unleashed inflation that has boosted the price of staple foods by as much as 400%, putting them even further out of reach of average North Koreans. All this is prompting painful memories of the famine that is thought to have killed more than two million people in the 1990s. According to a Chinese official who deals frequently with North Korean bureaucrats, the dire economic situation partly explains Kim Jong Il's willingness to risk everything by threatening to build nuclear weapons, apparently hoping to extract concessions from the outside world.

-- *Wall Street Journal*, 2/27/2003

For past injustices against people of the Niger Delta in the course of its activities, the Shell Petroleum Development Corporation may have to pay a sum of \$1.5 billion. The Ijaw community in Bayelsa State, under the aegis of Ijaw Aborigines, had last year petitioned the National Assembly over alleged injustices meted to them by oil companies, especially Shell in the course of their operations. In its report submitted to the deputy speaker of the House of Representatives, Chibudom Nwuche, recommended that Shell should pay \$1.5 billion compensation to the people. Expressing great concern over the level of environmental degradation caused by activities of oil companies in the Niger Delta, Nwuche said oil companies used standards different from those employed in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

-- *The Guardian (Nigeria)*, 2/27/2003

The Pentagon has begun telling the White House and Congress that defeating Iraq and occupying the country for six months could cost as much as \$85 billion, according to sources -- considerably more than what senior administration officials have been saying in public. Combined with aid for regional allies such as Turkey, the price tag for the conflict could top the \$100-billion mark. Analysts said the new war cost estimates are particularly troubling because they come as the administration predicts that Washington will continue to run high budget deficits even without the extra cost of a war and at a time when the U.S. economy seems unable to snap back from recession. America's last war with Iraq in the early 1990s cost \$61 billion. In that case, U.S. allies footed most of the bill. That almost certainly will not happen this time.

-- *Los Angeles Times*, 2/26/2003

Israel

6.6 million Israel's population
(5.2 million Jews and 1.2 million Arabs)

\$16,000 Avg. annual per capita income
6.5% Inflation (in 2002)
10.4% Unemployment rate

-- *Los Angeles Times*, 1/28/2003

The Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) broke the 212-meter mark on February 26, only 11 days after passing the 213-meter mark. The country's largest reservoir, with the northern rivers flowing strongly into it, now stands at 211.91 meters below sea level -- three meters below the optimum level. A Mekorot Water Company spokesman told Arutz-7 today that though the rains are "very considerable and welcome, Israel's water situation has been suffering for a number of years, and one rainy winter will not solve the problem." Strict conservation is still required to preserve the precious water. The snow covering the Judean Mountains is expected to melt quickly today and tomorrow, leading to possible flooding in the Judean Desert brooks.

-- *Arutz 7*, 2/27/2003

A total of 862,300 visitors from abroad entered the country during 2002, making it the worst year for tourism in 20 years. According to information released by the Central Bureau of Statistics on Sunday, last year was the first since 1982 in which fewer than a million visitors arrived. Last year's figures were 29% lower than those for 2001 and two-thirds lower than those recorded in 2000. There were hardly any passengers [entering Israel] from cruise ships with only 300 recorded during April and May, compared to 22,800 cruise passengers during 2001 and 255,000 during 2000.

-- *BridgesForPeace.com* 2/7/2003

Israel, which has led the world in developing pilotless drones for military use, is now testing a new generation the size of credit cards. The miniature drones will carry tiny cameras and are too small to be spotted by the eye or by radar. Launched by hand, the planes are more versatile than existing larger models. They are expected to be in use in about two years.

-- *The Media Line*, 2/23/2003

Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat asked Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein for continued help in fighting Israel, earlier this month. "Any kind of support and assistance from you in these difficult times will enable us to continue our persistence," Arafat wrote to Saddam, in a letter several weeks ago, according to, the Washington-based Middle East Media Research Institute. "Hand in hand, Iraq and the Palestinians will march to Jerusalem," Arafat added. Iraq has continually provided substantial cash rewards to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers and other Palestinians who died during the Intifada.

-- MEMRI, JTA, 2/28/2003

Book Review

The Next Christendom, The Coming of Global Christianity, Philip Jenkins. Oxford University Press, 2002. 270 pp.

Many Bible Students believe that the church nominal will rise to power prior to the time of final deliverance of the true Church. This belief is based on the interpretation of certain passages in Revelation as well as the studies of types in the lives of Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist. The difficulty with this view has been the seemingly diminishing power of the Catholic and Protestant churches in the West. Secular movements such as communism, feminism, and environmentalism would seem to have far more impact on shaping the last days.

Jenkins questions this view as he explores the much neglected explosive southward expansion of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This explosion barely registered on Western consciousness but Jenkins asserts that by the year 2050 only one Christian in five will be a non-Latino white person. The center of the Christian world will have shifted firmly to the southern hemisphere. Within a few decades Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa, and Manila will replace Rome, Athens, Paris, London, and New York as the new focal points in the Christian Church's universality. The churches that have grown most rapidly in the global south are far more traditional, morally conservative, and apocalyptic than their northern counterparts. Mysticism, Puritanism, belief in prophecy, faith-healing, exorcism, and dream visions are basic to the new churches in the south. The effect on global politics will be enormous as religious identification begins to take precedence over allegiance to secular nation states.

As Christianity grows in regions where Islam is also expected to increase -- as recent conflicts in Indonesia, Nigeria, and the Philippines show -- we may see a return to the religious wars of the past, fought out with renewed intensity and high-tech weapons far surpassing the swords and spears of the Middle Ages.

While Western commentators have declared that Christianity is declining, Jenkins has impeccably researched facts that show the opposite is true: Christianity is on the rise again. One of Jenkins' conclusions, based on this shift, is of particular interest to those Bible students who see a greater role for the papacy in the world prior to the time of the

end: "We will be looking at a world with an ever-greater imbalance between where the people are and where the wealth is. It would not take a great speculative leap to see the North-South economic divide as the key issue of the new century, and also (given the demographics) to see the conflict being defined in religious terms. ... The militant political conservatism of Pope John Paul II might represent a passing phase in the long history of the papacy, and we may yet live to see a revival of the radicalization of the 1970s."

-- Len Griehs

And Finally

An Invitation

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.
Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.
Give ear and come to me;
hear me, that your soul may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David" (Isaiah 55:1-3).

So Isaiah entreated his fellow Israelites to long for spiritual nourishment, and find it all supplied, free of cost, to nurture, comfort, guide and direct them through life's concerns. We have this privilege even more in the redemption provided us in Christ, and all its attendant call to glory. By and by the world will recognize their privileges in the Kingdom, when this heavenly nourishment, then common fare, will be richly appreciated by a grateful world.