

about it and would inquire about it, but the information was to be reserved for the teachers and writers of the New Testament times. See the following: Matt. 13: 16, 17; Eph. 3: 9, 10; 1 Pet. 1: 10-12; 2 Pet. 1: 20, 21. The reader of this COMMENTARY will be frequently reminded of this note which may be identified as the illustration of the telescope. I earnestly insist that he keep it in mind and consult it each time it is suggested.

Verse 1. *Vision* is from CHAZOWN and Strong defines it, "a sight (mentally), i. e., a dream, revelation, or oracle." Isaiah had this sight when he looked into the telescope described above. *Judah AND Jerusalem* are named in this way because the latter was the capital city of the former. The prophet wrote during the reigns of the kings named, beginning near the end of Uzziah's and closing near the end of Hezekiah's reign. The history of those reigns may be read in 2 Ki. 14th to 20th chapters; 2 Chr. 26th to 32nd.

Verse 2. *Heaven and earth* are called upon to hear, which is an accommodative form of a general summons for all intelligent creatures everywhere to listen. The *children* are the Israelites (v. 3) and the nourishing refers to the teaching and care the Lord had given his people. *Rebelled* means their general disobedience, but had special reference to their national idolatry which had become serious.

Verse 3. The dumb beast was given credit for knowing more than God's people. Sometimes ignorance may soften if not excuse one's guilt of failure. In the present case it will not do either because the ignorance was their own fault. It is explained they were ignorant because Israel *doth not consider*. That accounts for the ignorance of many people who pretend to desire understanding but say they cannot. The word of God is plainly revealed, but it must be *considered* or studied like all good literature.

Verse 4. *Sinful nation* indicates the people as a whole had gone wrong. There were some individuals who were righteous and who deplored the conditions, but most of them had followed the wicked rulers and other leaders. *Gone away backward* means they had backslidden from the path of righteousness.

Verse 5. The nation had gone so far in wrong the Lord did not expect any improvement but rather that it would get worse and worse. *Head and heart*

are practically the same, but when used distinctly the latter means the inner motives and feelings, the former the intelligence that directs them. The verse means that God's people had become completely corrupted with iniquity.

Verse 6. This verse is a practical repetition of the preceding one, carrying out the figure to specific items of the spiritual diseases infecting the nation.

Verse 7. The form of this verse is in the present tense but it is a prophecy, written over a century before the fulfillment. It was written about 760 B. C., and was fulfilled near 600 B. C. For the Biblical account of it read 2 Ki. 24 and 25.

Verse 8. *Daughter of Zion* is a term that occurs many times in the prophecies. The first word means the people of a nation or country as a group, and the last means the capital of that nation. When used together it means the people and its capital which is Zion, the chief spot in Jerusalem. This verse predicts the isolated condition of Jerusalem after the Babylonians had taken away all its chief men and dismantled the city of Jerusalem. *Lodge in a garden of cucumbers* is a shed to shelter the one who must keep guard over the field. If we can imagine the desolate lonesomeness of a place like that in the midst of a field of vines, we can appreciate the illustration.

Verse 9. God is merciful and never does entirely desert his people. He decreed they should go into captivity and be chastised for their sins. That would cut down their number, but there was to be a comparatively small number salvaged from the wreck of the captivity. *Remnant* is from SARIYD, which Strong defines, "a survivor." A *small remnant*, then would mean a few survivors. In Ezra 2: 64 the number that survived the long period is given as 42,360. In the days of their national strength they numbered about three million, allowing five to each family (Num. 26: 51). Had it not been for the Lord's love for his people the captivity would have destroyed them as completely as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had been.

Verse 10. Sodom as a literal city had been destroyed hundreds of years before and thus did not have any rulers when Isaiah lived. The term is therefore used figuratively and means the rulers of the people of Israel had become wicked like the men of Sodom;

that is, as bad as they, though in a different manner. Of course the reference to Gomorrah is in the same sense as that of Sodom. The several verses before us will be commented on in turn, but before so doing I will suggest the reader mark his Bible with a bracket to include verses 10-15. To the verses of the bracket as a whole apply the following note. The leaders of the nation, such as their priests and prophets and elders, were held chiefly responsible for the corruptions of the nation. While they imposed their injustices upon the common people and thus led them into wrong, they themselves were condemned in more severe terms than the people. However, since the people often were willing to be thus influenced, and "loved to have it so," God regarded the whole nation as at fault. Yet his rebukes were generally directed to these leaders and his threat of overthrow of the nation and rejection of its services were based upon these injustices imposed by the leaders upon the people. In trying to evade God's judgments upon them for these injustices, the leaders attempted to combine some things that had been commanded in the law such as instrumental music, sacrifices and the like, with their corrupt practices, that had not been commanded, thinking that God would accept the whole program including their corruptions, because of the things they did that had been once commanded and accepted. But God in various places gave them to understand that because of the general state of corruption in their national conduct, he would reject even their attempts of conduct that would have been otherwise accepted. This will explain the various places where it would seem that they were being condemned for these things which we understand were really a part of their divine law. This note should be read in connection with the present passage and also the following: Isa. 5: 11-13; 58: 2-7; Ezk. 34: 2, 3; Amos 5: 21-27; 6: 1-6; Joel 2: 13; Micah 6: 6-8, and in all other places in the scriptures, especially among the prophecies where this apparent contradiction occurs. There are no actual contradictions in the Bible, what seems to be are explainable by considering all of the facts.

Verse 11. *To what purpose* means, what do you think you will gain by your sacrifices? All of the items mentioned in this verse were commanded under the law, and hence were not the inventions of the people. But even

such things had become objectionable as explained above.

Verse 12. *Come to appear* refers to their coming to the temple where the altar for sacrifices was located. *Who hath required* is the same as saying God does not call for sacrifices from those whose general practices are corrupt.

Verse 13. *Oblations* is another name for "sacrifices and offerings." *New moons*, etc., referred to their holy days which also were a part of the Mosaic system. *Cannot away with* means the Lord could not tolerate sacrifices from such a corrupt nation.

Verse 14. The Jewish religious calendar was regulated by the moon and the new moon meant the first of another month. All of these dates were holy days and called for certain religious activities. *Appointed feasts* were the ones which the law specifically required, such as the Passover and Pentecost, called "feast of weeks" in the Old Testament. *Soul hateh* means the same as *cannot away with* in the preceding verse.

Verse 15. *Spread forth your hands* refers to a custom used in connection with prayer (Ex. 9: 29, 33; 1 Ki. 8: 22, 38, 54; Ezra 9: 5; Psalms 143: 6). Because of the corrupted state of the nation God declared he would not see their outstretched hands nor hear their prayers. *Hands full of blood*. Doubtless the leaders of the nation had caused the literal shedding of innocent blood, but other serious offenses were referred to as being guilty of blood (Lev. 17: 4; 20: 9, 12). This is the last verse of the bracket suggested above; and before going further I insist the student carefully read again the note at verse 10.

Verse 16. This verse is an exhortation to repentance. The first thing necessary for a genuine reformation is to *cease to do evil*. As long as a man continues to practice his evil deeds he cannot truthfully state that he has repented.

Verse 17. It is not enough that an unrighteous man stop doing things that are wrong. The best that could be said of such would be that it is negative righteousness. In addition to that he is required to *learn to do well*. The two clauses, *cease to do evil, learn to do well*, may truly be called a complete Biblical definition of repentance.

Verse 18. This verse also is an exhortation to repentance, with the added

promise of forgiveness and restoration to favor as a reward. The fate of the nation facing unavoidable captivity was threatened many times as we shall see. On the other hand, there are frequent admonitions to reform with assurances of the favor of God. This apparent contradiction is explained at length in a note beginning at bottom of page 174, Vol. 2 of the COMMENTARY. To conserve space it will not be copied here and the student is requested to read it in that place. *Reason together.* The second word is not in the original, so the phrase does not mean that God and man were to be joint participants in some kind of discussion. The first is from YAKACH and the part of Strong's definition that applies here is, "a primitive root; to be right (i. e., correct) . . . to decide, justify or convict." It means for them to listen and God will tell them what to do to get right. (Again remember the note referred to above.) When colors are used figuratively for moral subjects, red means guilt and white means innocence. *They* is a pronoun that grammatically stands for sins, but in the meaning of the passage it is that the sins will be removed, leaving the soul as white as snow.

Verse 19. The service offered to God must be done willingly or it will not be accepted. *Eat the good* means they would receive the good things provided by the Lord.

Verse 20. Continued rebellion would bring the sword of the enemy nation upon the guilty. The nation as a whole was to receive that fate regardless (as explained in the long note), but also the individuals who refused to reform when given the opportunity would likewise share in the calamity. Isaiah was the writer of these words but they were by the mouth of the Lord and were certain of fulfillment.

Verse 21. *Jerusalem* was the city referred to and it was called a *harlot*. This is from ZANAH and I shall quote the entire definition of Strong: "A primitive root [highly fed and therefore wanton—Strong]; to commit adultery (usually of the female and less often of simple fornication, rarely of involuntary ravishment); figuratively to commit idolatry (the Jewish people being regarded as the spouse of Jehovah)." The leading corruption of the Jewish nation was idolatry and that was considered spiritual adultery. The comparison is logical because religious intimacy with another than God is equivalent to fleshly intimacy

of a wife with a man other than her husband. *Murderers* is to be understood in the same light as *blood* in verse 15.

Verse 22. The *silver* refers to the righteousness and judgment of the preceding verse. Silver is a solid and wine is a liquid and both are valuable substances. In a figurative speech the prophet represents them as deteriorating. To do so in their own classes as to material form, the silver could only become dross (a waste product from which the silver had originally been separated), and the wine would become some other less concentrated liquid such as water.

Verse 23. A *prince* was "a head person (of any rank or class)" according to Strong's lexicon. It refers to the outstanding men in the Jewish nation, not necessarily to officers. But the people attached a great deal of importance to such persons and in turn were largely influenced by them. They were so greedy for wealth that they accepted *gifts* which means bribes. That is why they are said to be companions of thieves. A man who will either offer a bribe or accept one is as bad as a thief. Such men will take advantage of the unfortunate if someone who has enmity for those unfortunate ones will offer a bribe to corrupt a decision they are asked to make.

Verse 24. *Ease* and *avenge* mean the same as used in this verse. *Adversaries* and *enemies* also mean the same in this passage, applying to the people of Israel. By rebelling against the law they had become enemies of God. The verse means God would take vengeance on them by the great event of the captivity.

Verse 25. *Tin* is from BEDIYE and Strong defines it "alloy (because removed by smelting)." Dross has practically the same meaning, and they both are used to compare the chief corruption of the Jewish nation which was idolatry. The verse is a prediction that the judgment to be brought on the nation (which we shall learn was the Babylonian captivity), would completely cure it of that great iniquity. To show that the prediction was fulfilled I shall quote some statements from authentic histories as follows: "But now Pilate, the procurator of Judea, removed the army from Caesarea to Jerusalem, to take their winter quarters there, in order to abolish the Jewish laws. So he introduced Caesar's effigies [his pictures], which were upon

the ensigns, and brought them into the city; whereas our law forbids us the very making of images; on which account the former procurators were wont to make their entry into the city with such ensigns as had not those ornaments. Pilate was the first who brought those images to Jerusalem, and set them up there; which was done without the knowledge of the people, because it was done in the night-time; but as soon as they knew it, they came in multitudes to Caesarea, and interceded with Pilate many days, that he would remove the images; and when he would not grant their requests, because it would tend to the injury of Caesar, while yet they persevered in their request, on the sixth day he ordered his soldiers to have their weapons privately, while he came and sat upon his judgment seat, which seat was so prepared in open place of the city, that it concealed the army that lay ready to oppress them. And when the Jews petitioned him again, he gave a signal to the soldiers to compass them round, and threatened that their punishment should be no less than immediate death unless they would leave off disturbing him, and go their ways home. But they threw themselves upon the ground, and laid their necks bare, and said they would take their death very willingly, rather than the wisdom of their laws should be transgressed; upon which Pilate was deeply affected with their firm resolution to keep their laws inviolable, and presently commanded the images to be carried back from Jerusalem to Caesarea." Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18-3-1.

"The captivity, though a judgment on the people for their sins of unfaithfulness to the covenant, was in reality an unconscious preparation for the times of the Messiah. Their national loss was turned to gain; not only were they weaned from their proneness to idolatry [emphasis mine—E. M. Z.], but their departures from monotheism [the doctrine of one only true God] were, after meeting with Persian types of thought, corrected and reformed. . . . The return from captivity is thus the third and final stage in the growth of Israel as the covenant people. Monotheism, exceptional in the days of Elijah and the early prophets, was burned into them by the fires of persecution. This highest stage of monotheism was the elevated point of view which they had reached in the third and final stage of their spiritual growth

on the return from captivity." J. B. Heard, Lecturer, University of Cambridge, p. 68 in "Bible Helps," International. This lengthy quotation from history will not be repeated for the sake of space, and the student is urged to make note of its location in this volume, and frequent reference will be made to it as the studies in the prophecies of the Old Testament proceed.

Verse 26. *Judges* means men who rule and *counsellors* means those who advise. After the return from the captivity the nation was again permitted to have its priests and teachers according to the law of Moses. For the present I shall make only a general reference to the history of the fulfillment regarding this prediction. Read very carefully the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which gives the history of the restoration that was effected after the release from the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 27. For the meaning of *Zion* see the comments at verse 8. One part of the lexicon definition of *redeemed* is "to release," and refers to the act of the Persian king Cyrus in giving the Jews their liberty (Ezra 1: 1-4). *Judgment* means "a verdict" according to Strong, and the verdict was that of Cyrus just cited. The importance of this verdict is indicated by the fact that it was made a part of the royal record (Ezra 5: 13, 17; 6: 1-3). *Converts* is from a Hebrew word that means those who return, and applies here to the Jews who returned from captivity. *With righteousness* means it was the right thing to allow the Jews to return from the captivity.

Verse 28. The parts of many books in the Bible are not always strictly in chronological order as to the time of the events. An instance of that is before us now. The preceding verse pertained to the conditions after the captivity, the present one to those before. The *transgressors* and *sinner*s were the guilty Jews who were to be *consumed* or *chastised* by the captivity.

Verse 29. The mention of *oaks* is an indirect reference to the idolatrous practices of the heathen which were imitated by the Jews, and became their chief national corruption. On the subject of trees as related to religious matters, Smith's Bible Dictionary has the following to say: "In the religions of the ancient heathen world groves play a prominent part. In the old times altars only were erected to the gods. It was thought wrong to shut up the



gods within walls, and hence trees were the first temples; and from the earliest times groves are mentioned in connection with religious worship. Gen. 12: 6, 7; Deut. 11: 30." In view of this we will see many references to oaks, trees and groves in the prophecies, and it will be understood to mean the practices of idolatry. *Ashamed of the oaks* means they will be cured of their idolatry by the captivity. (See the note at verse 25.) The *gardens of the ancient people* contained trees as well as smaller plants, and the reference to them in this verse is for the same purpose as the *oaks*.

Verse 30. The nation had worshiped the oaks in their idolatry and that was to cause their fading and downfall as a nation. The fading of an oak tree, therefore, is used to illustrate the fate of the nation. Their gardens contained trees which they worshiped, therefore their sad end is compared to a garden that had been deprived of the moisture needful for its life.

Verse 31. *Tow* is from NEORETH, which Strong defines, "something shaken out, i. e., tow (as the refuse of flax)." The leaders of the nation had been strong like the good part of flax, but the captivity was to reduce them and make them like the refuse of the plant. *Maker of it* means the works of these once strong men. It was to become as a spark, referring to the fires of chastisement in the captivity. *Burn together* means these evil men and their works were both to be consumed by this figurative fire. *None shall quench* refers to the certainty of the captivity. On this last thought the student is urged to read the note at bottom of page 174, Vol. 2 of the COMMENTARY, explanatory of one of the apparent contradictions.

## ISAIAH 2

Verse 1. The character of the prophetic books will make it advisable for the student frequently to mark a number of verses as one bracket and label it as a whole by a general subject. The several verses may then be commented on in their turn as their particular subject matter may require. Accordingly the first four verses of this chapter should be bracketed, and the subject to be attached is "the kingdom of Christ." This verse starts much like the first chapter but without giving the dates. See comments at ch. 1: 1 for *Judah and Jerusalem*, also for the matter of dates. It also will be

well to read again the illustration of the telescope.

Verse 2. *Last days* is a phrase used in the Bible with various meanings, depending on the connection of the subject matter involved. It sometimes means the last days of the Jewish Dispensation, sometimes the last Dispensation as a whole, and sometimes the last part of the third or Christian Dispensation. In our verse it has the first meaning stated, for it was in the closing days of the Jewish Dispensation that the kingdom of Christ was set up. However, the fact of starting this kingdom put an end to the Jewish Dispensation for religious purposes. *Nations* is from GOR and Strong defines it, "from the same root as GEVAH (in the sense of massing); a foreign nation; hence a Gentile." The prediction means that Gentiles as well as Jews were to have access to this new kingdom. (See Eph. 2: 17.) *Mountain* in figurative and prophetic language means a government. The prediction means the government of Christ was to be established in the top of the mountains, or that it would be above all other governments. (See Dan. 2: 44.)

Verse 3. *Many* is from RAB and Strong defines it, "abundant (in quantity, size, age, number, rank, quality)." *People* is from AM and Strong defines it, "a people (as a congregated unit); specifically a tribe (as those of Israel); hence (collectively) troops or attendants; figuratively a flock." If the two italicized words are used as a phrase it means the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Perhaps the first word would seem too strong when used for only two classes (Jews and Gentiles), but note that part of the definition includes "size" as well as numerical amount. Since the two classes would include all the people of the earth, the word *many* (with its meaning of "size") would aptly designate them. Then if the first word in the definition, "abundant" or numerous, would refer to the numerical importance of the prediction, the fulfillment of that prediction may be seen in Acts 2: 41; 4: 4; 5: 14; 6: 1; 8: 6; 12: 24. For explanation of *Zion* and *Jerusalem* see the comments at ch. 1: 8. The *law and word of the Lord* are the same here and refer to the Gospel of Christ.

Verse 4. This verse has been erroneously interpreted as a prediction that carnal or literal wars would cease. The mistake is obvious when it is remembered that the subject is still the

kingdom of Christ and does not concern the temporal affairs of the world. It is true that in proportion as men imbibe the principles of the Gospel they will cease to have the motive for carnal warfare. But such a peace might well be considered as a "by-product" of the Gospel and not its direct purpose. The prediction means the kingdom of Christ was not to be supported by the carnal or material sword as was the kingdom in the Jewish Dispensation.

Verse 5. Dropping the role of a prophet for a brief time, Isaiah exhorts the *house of Jacob* or the Israelite nation to walk in the light of the Lord.

Verse 6. *Thou* stands for the Lord who was mentioned at the close of the preceding verse. The prophet acknowledges the just reason of the Lord for having forsaken the house of Jacob, that they were *replenished from the east*. They had taken too much interest in the heathen of the countries lying east of them. *Soothsayers* were people who practiced magic in a tricking manner to get temporal advantage of the foreigners. This unrighteous business brought an immigration of corrupt people and they in turn corrupted God's people with their evil practices.

Verse 7. The possession of wealth is not necessarily a sin but when it is obtained by means and with the motive as was exhibited by the nation of Israel it does indicate that something is wrong. It was obtained by improper association with the heathen about them and then used in connection with idolatry. Chariots were usually employed for war purposes, but otherwise they were used for pleasure and display. They were useless in either case without horses so that called for the obtaining of those animals in large numbers. That was considered an unfavorable indication, especially when indulged in by the kings. (See Deut. 17: 16.)

Verse 8. Idolatrous worship seems to follow logically when great wealth is obtained. That is especially true when it is obtained unlawfully. It is wrong to worship any kind of idols, but special mention is made of the ones which *their own hands* had made. The main point is that of inconsistency. If a man makes an idol he knows it could not be even as great as he, therefore why worship it?

Verse 9. *Mean man* refers to a man of low degree and *great man* is the opposite. The idea is that all classes were bowing to these dumb idols and the Lord was sorely provoked at them both. *Forgive them not* is on the subject of the determination to punish the Israelite nation regardless of some individuals who were righteous. For the explanation of this apparent contradiction, see the long note beginning at bottom of page 174 in Vol. 2 of this COMMENTARY.

Verse 10. This verse is a figurative warning for the corrupt nation. *Rock* indicates strength, and *dust* is a symbol of dejection or a downcast feeling. The passage means they should humble themselves and seek a reliable refuge from God's wrath.

Verse 11. This verse is another prediction of the captivity and its chastising effect upon the nation. The Lord was to be exalted by the event because he would demonstrate his superiority over all the false gods.

Verse 12. *Day of the Lord* means the period covering the captivity. *Proud, lofty* and *lifted up* refer to the same thing. Whenever a man rejects the authority of God's law he is regarded as being proud (1 Tim. 6: 3, 4).

Verse 13. This is a reference to idolatry and its cure. For the explanation of oaks and other trees in connection with idolatry see the comments at ch. 1: 29. On the subject of the cure from idolatry see the historical quotation at ch. 1: 25.

Verse 14. The *day of the Lord* is still in the mind of the prophet in this and the remaining verses of the chapter. (See comments on the phrase in verse 12.) The period of the captivity was to bring about the results or conditions mentioned in these verses. *Mountains* in figurative language means governments or rulers. The government of the Jews and its rulers were to be brought down.

Verse 15. *Towers and fenced walls* refers to the defences of the nation. They were to be overthrown by the enemy. The fulfillment of this prediction may be seen in 2 Ki. 24 and 25, and the long quotation from secular history that will be made at the beginning of the next chapter.

Verse 16. The Israelites had done much traffic over the Mediterranean Sea and thereby enriched themselves by dealing with other nations. All of this would be stopped by the captivity.

*Pictures* is from SEKIYAH, which Strong defines, "a conspicuous object." Pictures of various kinds were used by the heathen as objects of worship and admiration. The Israelites imitated that practice and that caused the displeasure of God to be poured out against them.

Verse 17. This is practically the same as verse 11.

Verse 18. This and the following three verses should be marked as a bracket and entitled "the cure from idolatry," followed with a rereading of the note at ch. 1: 25. Then observe the comments that are offered on the several verses here. The idols literally were destroyed in many instances, but the principal idea is that the worship of them would be utterly abolished.

Verse 19. *They* refers to the idols of the preceding verse grammatically speaking, but really means the worshipers of those idols, because dumb idols could not have any such a sentiment as fear. *Shake terribly the earth* refers to the time when the nation would be convulsed by the siege and captivity.

Verse 20. A *mole* is defined in the lexicon as "a burrower," a creature that seeks to make a hiding place in the earth. The *bats* were found in the caverns of the East according to Smith's Bible Dictionary. The figurative use that is made of these creatures is to compare the desire of the idol worshipers to consign their idols to the regions of darkness so as never to see them again.

Verse 21. This is a continuation of the thought in the preceding verse. The idol worshipers would be determined to put their idols out from their sight or consideration. Such a result is predicted and was actually fulfilled by the captivity.

Verse 22. This verse is a severe comment on the human being, and a prediction that God would reject him because of his evil doings.

### ISAIAH 3

General remarks: The first four verses of this chapter should be marked as a bracket and entitled "Babylonian Captivity." Before going into comments on the several verses a few statements will be made on the subject of captivity. There were two of them in the history of the Jews. The first one occurred in 722 B.C. when the kingdom of Israel or of the ten tribes was taken away by Assyria,

and this is known in history as the Assyrian Captivity. The Biblical account of this is in 2 Ki. 17. A little more than a century later (606 B. C.), the kingdom of Judah or of the two tribes was taken away by the Babylonians, and the Biblical account of this is in 2 Ki. 24 and 25. But both captivities were predicted by Isaiah and other prophets, hence some secular history will be quoted to show the fulfillment of the predictions. The following will recite the history of the two captivities:

"The Kingdom of Israel (953 ?-722). —The kingdom of the Ten Tribes maintained its existence for about two hundred years. Many passages of its history are recitals of the struggles between the worship of the national god Yahweh (Jehovah) and the idolatrous service of the gods of the surrounding nations. The cause of Yahweh was boldly espoused by a line of remarkable prophets, among whom Elijah and Elisha in the ninth century, and Amos and Hosea in the eighth, stand preeminent. The little kingdom was at last overwhelmed by the Assyrian power. This happened 722 B.C., when Samaria, as we have already narrated in the history of Assyria, was captured by Sargon, king of Nineveh, and the flower of the people were carried away into captivity beyond the Mesopotamian rivers. The gaps made in the population of Samaria by the deportation of its best inhabitants were filled with other subjects or captives of the Assyrian king. The descendants of these, mingled with the Israelites that were still left in the country, formed the Samaritans of the time of Christ.

The Kingdom of Judah (953 ?-586 B.C.). This little kingdom, torn by internal religious dissensions, and often on the very verge of ruin from Egyptian or Assyrian armies, maintained an independent existence for over three centuries. But upon the extension of the power of Babylon to the west, Jerusalem was forced to acknowledge the suzerainty [authority] of the Babylonian kings. The kingdom at last shared the fate of its northern rival. Nebuchadnezzar, the powerful king of Babylon, in revenge for an uprising of the Jews, besieged and captured Jerusalem and carried away a large part of the people into captivity at Babylon. This event virtually ended the separate political life of the Hebrew race (586 B.C.)" Myers' Ancient History, pp. 78, 79.

"And such was the end of the nation of the Hebrews, as it hath been delivered down to us, it having twice gone beyond Euphrates; for the people of the ten tribes were carried out of Samaria by the Assyrians in the days of king Hoshea; after which the people of the two tribes that remained after Jerusalem was taken were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon and Chaldea. Now as to Shalmanezar, he removed the Israelites out of their country, and placed therein the nations of the Cutheans, who had formerly belonged to the innerparts of Persia and Media, but were then called Samaritans, by taking the name of the country to which they were removed. But the king of Babylon, who brought out the two tribes, placed no other nation in their country, by which means all Judea and Jerusalem, and the temple, continued to be a desert for seventy years; but the entire interval of time which passed from the captivity of the Israelites, (the 10 tribes) to the carrying away of the two tribes proved to be a hundred and thirty years, six months, and ten days." Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book 10, Chapter 9, Section 7.

Verse 1. *Jerusalem and Judah* are both mentioned because the first was the capital of the second. *Stay and staff* refers to the support from bread and water. These were to be taken away by the siege preceding the overthrow of the city.

Verse 2. These were the leading citizens of the nation who were to be taken away into captivity. (see 2 Ki. 24: 14.)

Verse 3. This refers especially to the men in official position as well as those who were leaders in trades. The removal of these men would leave the country weakened.

Verse 4. With the most influential men removed from their midst, the weaker ones would naturally come to the front and take charge of things.

Verse 5. It would seem that after the captivity occurred there were some people still left in the country, else they could not be oppressed *one by another*. This was due to the fact that the great captivity that lasted 70 years all told was carried out in three separate movements. This is explained in detail in Vol. 2, p 178 of this Commentary, and the student is requested to read that note.

Verse 6. The distress described in

this verse would be explained by the note cited in the preceding verse and the comments in connection therewith.

Verse 7. Men would be invited and even urged to take over the responsibility of caring for the people in distress. But each man would be so distressed himself that he could not bear any of the burden of others.

Verse 8. *Is ruined and is fallen* (present tense) refers to events more than a century in the future. For explanation of this see the comments in third paragraph of "general remarks" at Ch. 1 of this book. All this was to be brought upon the nation because it had provoked the Lord by evil practices.

Verse 9. The popular phrase "guilty look" has an illustration in the case of the men of Judah. Their arrogant countenance is compared to that of the Sodomites. The brazenness of those people is forcibly set forth in Gen. 19: 4-9. *Rewarded evil unto themselves* means they will bring evil upon themselves by their own doing.

Verse 10. This is another verse where the reader should consult the note at page 174, Vol. 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 11. *Reward of his hands* is explained at v. 9.

Verse 12. See the information given at vs. 4, 5 above.

Verses 13-15. This paragraph is directed especially against the leaders of the nation. They had abused their authority and position over the people and hence were held more heavily responsible for the situation. (See the long note at ch. 1: 10.)

Verse 16. In the greater number of cases the men were the ones reproved for selfishness and extravagant living. However, from here to the end of the chapter that charge will be brought against the women of Jerusalem. Their luxurious and gaudy ornaments, together with their impudent and immodest behaviour, displeased the Lord very sorely. Because of this the prophet was inspired to enumerate to these frivolous women the articles of foolish pride which they had displayed, and to predict the humiliation of having them taken away. I shall comment on these articles in their order, in this and the following verses. *Stretched forth necks* means they held their heads high in a haughty manner. *Wanton eyes* denotes a look of flir-



tion as if to invite intimate advances. *Mincing* is from TAPHAPH which Strong defines, "to trip (with short steps) coquetishly [flirtatiously]." *Making a tinkling* means to put on anklets for the purpose of sound and ornamentation. This verse describes what would be called "loud" or "fast" women today. The anklets attracted attention to the feet that were tripping gaily in a suggestive manner. Added to this was their high-headed posture set off with alluring glances from their voluptuous eyes.

Verse 17. The Lord was sorely displeased with the practices of these women and warned that he would reduce them to deserved shame. The wording of this verse is largely figurative and means the condition of the women would be reversed. The reduction of a person's pride and the exposure of his corruption was elsewhere compared to the act of uncovering his body to his shame. (see Jer. 13: 22; Nah. 3: 5.)

Verse 18. In this and some verses following the prophet itemizes many of the articles of finery by which the women of Jerusalem had decorated themselves in their desire to attract attention to their persons. The Lord predicted the removal of these things which was to take place through the siege and captivity. *Bravery* is defined "ornament" in the lexicon, and means the ornaments of beauty would be taken away from these women. *Tinkling ornaments* are the same anklets mentioned in v. 16. *Cauls* were ornamental networks for the hair. *Tires* is from SAHARON and Strong defines it, "a round pendant for the neck." It was worn like a locket at the end of a necklace.

Verse 19. *Chains* is from NETIYPHAH and Strong's lexicon defines it, "a pendant for the ears (especially of pearls)." They were the same as ear-drops of our time, that is, they were worn for the purpose of ornaments in the ears. *Bracelets* means the same as the word does today. *Mufflers* were long veils that were allowed to flutter as the woman was passing along the way.

Verse 20. *Bonnets* is defined in the lexicon, "fancy head-dress." *Ornaments of the legs* are all from one word which Strong defines, "an (ornamental) ankle-chain." *Headbands* is defined in the lexicon, "an (ornamental) girdle (for women)." *Tablets* is from a word of such indefinite meaning that I shall merely say it refers to some

particular part of the attire. *Earrings* is from LACHASH, which Strong defines, "concretely an amulet [a gem worn for "good luck"]."

Verse 21. *Rings* has the ordinary meaning, but the ancient ones usually had a "set" with a signet engraved. *Nose jewels* were rings worn in the nose as ornaments.

Verse 22. *Changeable suits of apparel* are all from one original word and it is defined, "a mantle (as easily drawn off)." It means a garment that is easily "changed," that is, easy to put on and take off. *Mantles* were cloaks such as are worn today. *Wimples* were wide cloaks made especially for women. *Crisping pins* were bags for holding pins, something on the order of a woman's purse.

Verse 23. *Glasses* were mirrors with the same meaning the word has today. *Fine linen* was a wrapper made of that material. *Hoods* were pieces of cloth wrapped round the head. *Vails* were spreading wrappers for the head. Not all of the articles named in the preceding verses would have been wrong had the general surrounding been proper. Neither were all of them worn by any one woman, for that would have been almost out of the question. But they were the list of ornamental "make-up" from which the vain minded women drew in their efforts at gaudy attractiveness. God was so displeased with the situation as a whole he decreed to take the entire collection from them.

Verse 24. The object in this group of opposite terms is to indicate the reversed condition that would come upon these worldly minded women, not that all of the things named would literally be used. Most of the words are self-explanatory but I shall comment on a few of them. *A stomacher* is a figured or decorated mantle, and it was to be replaced with a simple girdle or belt made of burlap. *Burning* is defined in the lexicon, "a brand or scar." The beautiful skin of these women was to be marred by defects to such an extent that it would render them unsightly.

Verse 25. Another misfortune that was to befall these women would be the loss of their men. They were to become victims of the war brought on by the besiegers. It is true that the women would feel the loss of the men personally which would be a blow to their vanity, but the city as a whole would share in the humiliating loss.

Verse 26. The gates of the cities were the points of diplomatic activities, but on account of the siege these spots would be draped in mourning and in disgrace.

#### ISAIAH 4

Verse 1. *That day* refers to the time of the siege and captivity predicted in the foregoing chapter. So many of the men were to have been taken away that it would leave a shortage of men; only one for every seven women. It was considered a reproach for a woman to be a "wallflower" in the national social and domestic life. Since plurality of wives had been tolerated, these women were willing to accept the men, not as "meal tickets," but in order to avoid the reproach of being left single.

Verse 2. The scene moves farther ahead to the end of the captivity and *that day* refers to it. *Branch* means a sprout that is used to start a plant, and it is employed to compare the institution of the Lord that will have been stunted by the 70 years of the captivity, but will be permitted again to grow in its own national soil. *Escaped of Israel* means the "remnant" explained at ch. 1: 9.

Verse 3. *Left in Zion and remaineth in Jerusalem* is not confined to the few Jews who might have been left in the home land during the captivity. The idea of the recovery applies to all who were fortunate enough to survive the long trial. Although they had been in the land of Babylon, they were regarded as people of *Zion*, the most important district in *Jerusalem*.

Verse 4. *Washed away the filth* refers to the recovery from the scourge of idolatry. (See the comments and note at ch. 1: 25.)

Verse 5. Reference to the cloud and flame is similar to the protection that the Lord gave Israel as they were leaving Egypt (Ex. 13: 21). God promised that his protection would be over his people after they had returned to their home land.

Verse 6. This is practically the same in thought as the preceding verse. It is expressed in figurative language. As extreme heat would call for a shaded place and a storm would require a shelter, so the Lord would be all this to his people.

#### ISAIAH 5

Verse 1. The complaint against Israel's ungrateful conduct is expressed in the form of a parable. The

grape-growing industry was one of the leading ones in the land of Palestine and hence the Bible has numerous references to it. In the present instance the Israelite nation is compared to a vineyard that was well planted and kept. Hillsides were especially desirable spots for the planting of vineyards, so the prophet represents the favor of God to his people by saying he had selected a *very fruitful hill* as the site for his vineyard.

Verse 2. A vineyard should be fenced as a protection against destructive creatures. Smith's Bible Dictionary says this on the present subject: "The vineyard, which was generally on a hill, Isa. 5: 1; Jer. 31: 5; Amos 9: 13, was surrounded by a wall or hedge in order to keep out the wild boars, Psa. 8: 13, jackals and foxes, Num. 22: 24; Neh. 4: 3; Cant. [Song of Solomon] 2: 15; Ezk. 13: 4, 5; Matt. 2: 33. Within the vineyard was one or more towers of stone in which the vine-dresser lived. Isa. 1: 8; 5: 2; Matt. 21: 33. The vat, which was dug, Matt. 21: 33, or hewn out of the rocky soil, and the press, were a part of the vineyard furniture. Isa. 5: 2." Hence God gave his vineyard every attention necessary for its success. He built the fence and removed the stones (the heathen nations, book of Joshua), planted it with a choice vine (the descendants of Jacob), and built a tower (the tabernacle and temple service). With all these provisions the vineyard should have produced the best of fruit. Instead of genuine grapes the vine brought forth *wild grapes*. These words are from one Hebrew word, *BEUSKIYM*, which is defined in the lexicon, "poison-berries." The *grapes* which the Israelite nation was expected to produce was the true service to the one and only God. The *wild grapes* or "poison-berries" which it produced was the idolatrous worship.

Verse 3. Jerusalem was the capital city of the nation of Judah. The men of the country are called upon to consider the situation very seriously.

Verse 4. An accusing question was asked of them. They were challenged to name one thing that had been left undone that would have helped them in bearing fruit to the owner of the vineyard. Of course there could be no reply to this that would have been any credit to them. Then another question was asked, and that was why the vineyard had produced this poison fruit when it had been provided with

everything needful for bringing forth real grapes. Again there could be no truthful answer that would not have been an admission of gross neglect and ingratitude to the Lord of the vineyard.

Verse 5. *Go to* is an expression to call attention to what is about to be said. If the wall about a vineyard was broken down the beasts would ruin the vines. Thus the prediction was made that Israel would be exposed to the enemy beasts (Babylonians).

Verse 6. These figures of speech refer to the condition that would come to the nation by reason of the siege and captivity.

Verse 7. The prophet wrote the interpretation of the parable. *House of Israel* denotes the race in general, and the *men of Judah* the particular part of it that was involved in the present guilt. The word for *judgment* means a verdict, either favorable or unfavorable. The context shows it means favorable in this case, and the men of Judah should have rendered favorable verdicts for the poor people under them, but instead they imposed upon them. *Ory* is defined in Strong's lexicon as "a shriek." That was what the leaders wrung from the people instead of dealing righteously with them.

Verse 8. The various evils that are described in this chapter were charged against the nation, especially the leaders. This verse means the practice of getting a monopoly of the land by getting possession of all the property possible.

Verse 9. *In mine ears* means the Lord hears and knows everything that his people are doing. It was for that reason their country was to be laid bare.

Verse 10. Ten acres of land and an homer of seed were large compared with a bath and an ephah. The contrasts were drawn to indicate the extremes to which the land would be brought by the invading army.

Verses 11, 12. This paragraph deals with the subject of the mixed activities of the nation. They were wicked in the main, but thought they could "get by" if they would mix some of the things that had been approved by the Lord. The reader is urged to read the note at ch. 1: 10.

Verse 13. *People are gone* is past tense in form but future in thought because it is a prophecy. This is explained in "general remarks" at ch. 1

of this book. The prediction has reference to the captivity (then more than a century in the future). *Have no knowledge* is explained by their lack of attention in ch. 1: 3. *Honorable men* are the ones recorded in 2 Ki. 24: 14 who were carried away into the captivity.

Verse 14. *Hell* is from SHEOL and Strong defines it, "hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates." Robert Young defines it, "the unseen state." In the King James translation the word is rendered grave 31 times, hell 31, pit 3. *Hath enlarged* is another prediction in historic form, referring to the time of the captivity. The pronoun *their* stands for the chief men of the preceding verses. No doubt most of them were destined to die and enter the place in the unseen world where the spirits of wicked men go at death. However, the figurative sense also applies to the case for *their glory* was to fade away and be forgotten.

Verse 15. *Mean* man was the common ordinary fellow, and the *mighty* and *lofty* was the opposite. The verse means the national downfall would affect all classes of men.

Verse 16. When an unrighteous person is given divine chastisement, he does not receive any glory from it, but the Lord does obtain exaltation and glory from it.

Verse 17. The first part of this verse is figurative. It represents the freedom of the country after the nation had been shorn of its violent men. Things were to be so calm that even lambs would feel safe to graze in the pastures. *Strangers* means the invading forces that were to take possession of the things formerly enjoyed by the *fat ones*, meaning the leaders who had grown fat at the expense of the common people.

Verse 18. A *cord* or *cart rope* is a strong implement by which anything might be drawn or handled. To use one in drawing or producing iniquity would indicate a very vigorous life of unrighteous practices. The leaders especially had been doing that.

Verse 19. This verse shows the sneering attitude of the corrupt leaders toward the Lord. They are expressing a scoffing challenge for God just to try carrying out the chastisements predicted. They are saying, "let him [the Lord] hurry and perform his threats so we can see how it looks."

Verse 20. No man in his right mind would deliberately say that an evil thing is good. The prophet means they were mixing all kinds of principles and not distinguishing between things that differ. The motives for such conduct might be many, but one would be an effort to evade responsibility for their guilty behaviour.

Verse 21. *Wise in their own eyes* is similar to being "wise in their own conceit," and that was condemned by Paul in Rom. 12: 16. Such a man will not likely listen to instruction because he thinks he knows more than do his teachers.

Verse 22. About the greatest boast these men thought they could make was to be able to keep up with the most extravagant imbibers in drink.

Verse 23. The *reward* means a bribe that was offered to defeat justice and deprive a good man of his rights in connection with a controversy.

Verse 24. This verse is a figurative prediction of the utter defeat that was to come upon these wicked leaders when the invading army was brought against them.

Verse 25. The future degradation of the Israelite nation is still the subject, and this time it is likened to a very low material. The violence to be exerted upon their bodies is compared to something *torn*. That word is rendered "dung" in the margin, and Strong's definition of the original is, "something swept away, i.e. filth." It will help to clarify the illustration to quote Smith's Bible Dictionary on this subject. "The uses of dung were twofold—as manure and as fuel. The manure consisted either of straw steeped in liquid manure, Isa. 25: 10, or the sweepings, Isa. 5: 25, of the streets and roads, which were carefully removed from about the houses, and collected in heaps outside the walls of the towns at fixed spots—hence the dunggate at Jerusalem—and thence removed in due time to the fields." *For all this . . . stretched out still* is a statement that is peculiar to the book of Isaiah. It is to convey the idea of the repeated and continuous display of God's wrath against them.

Verse 26. This and all the rest of the verses in the chapter should be marked into a bracket. It is a prediction of the invasion of the Babylonians, and the Biblical account of it is in 2 Ki. 24: 10-16. An *ensign* is a signal and to *hiss* means to whistle,

calling attention to the signal. The idea is that God would call upon some foreigners to come promptly in answer to the signal.

Verse 27. This verse describes the completeness of the equipment with which the Babylonians would come at the Lord's call. They were to be an instrument by which God purposed to chastise his disobedient people.

Verse 28. Warfare was conducted largely with the bow and arrow. It is significant, therefore, to say the arrows of the invading forces would be sharp, and their *bows bent* which would mean they would be drawn ready to thrust the arrows. Horses were used to draw the war chariots. These horses would have such hardened hoofs that they would speed along so fast the wheels would spin like the whirlwind.

Verse 29. The fierceness of the Babylonians is likened to the roar of lions, and their eagerness to conquer with savage pressure is compared to the ravenous appetite of those wild beasts. The unavoidable surety of the capture is predicted in the verse.

Verse 30. *Darkness and sorrow* refers to the desolate condition that would be left after the invasion and carrying away into Babylon.

## ISAIAH 6

Verse 1. The death of king Uzziah is recorded in 2 Ki. 15: 7 (there called Azariah), and 2 Chr. 26: 23. By consulting those places the reader can get a glimpse of the situation existing at that time, and it was about that time when Isaiah began his writing. (see ch. 1: 1.) *I saw* means that the prophet looked into the vision presented to him which I have illustrated by the telescope in the "General remarks" at the beginning of the book. *Train* means the skirt of a robe and this one filled the temple, which indicated the greatness of the Lord's glory.

Verse 2. *Seraphims* is from SARAPH and Strong defines it, "burning, i.e. (figuratively) poisonous (serpent); specifically a seraph or symbolical creature (from their copper color)." Smith's Bible Dictionary calls them "an order of celestial beings." This vision of Isaiah occurred before the events of Matt. 27: 52, 53 and Eph. 4: 8, therefore these creatures must have been among the heavenly beings that take the general name of angels. Evidently the special name given



them here was because of their fiery appearance, since that is the outstanding item in the lexicon definition. The whole scene was set to display the glory of the Lord. The seraphims engaged at this particular scene had each six wings. The suggestions of Smith's Bible Dictionary on the significance of these wings and their use of them, seems reasonable to me and I shall quote them: "With one of which [pair of wings] they covered their faces (a token of humility); with the second they covered their feet (a token of respect); while with the third they flew." These creatures had also some parts of a human being (v. 6).

Verse 3. These heavenly creatures were exclaiming to each other in honor of the Lord. *Earth is full* was indicative of the majestic power of the Lord over the forces of the earth. The prediction was about to be made of the revolutionary events of the captivity. Those events would be in protest against the national corruptions.

Verse 4. Even the parts of the heavenly temple were affected by the tribute of these seraphims to the glory of God. *Filled with the smoke* indicated the fullness of God's glory.

Verse 5. Isaiah was a righteous man and no uncleanness had been charged against him. It was natural, however, for him to have a feeling of pollution when he was so completely surrounded with the iniquities of which his people were guilty. This caused him to accuse himself of being unworthy in the sight of the Lord. For his personal satisfaction, the Lord accepted the complaint as if it were a confession.

Verse 6. The altar near the entrance to the tabernacle and temple had a fire going continuously while in service. That fact was the background for this vision in which the seraphim was seen to get the live coal. It was appropriate for this heavenly being to get this purifying substance from that place, even though the entire procedure was in the form of a vision for the information of the prophet.

Verse 7. The *iniquity* and *sin* is explained at v. 5. The reason for applying the fire to his lips was his complaint of being a man of *unclean lips*, which meant they were unconsecrated or unworthy. He used the term in the same sense as Moses used *uncircumcised lips* in Ex. 6: 30. It was significant also for the lips to be the point of application for the puri-

fying element. The special work for which the Lord wished to use the prophet was that of speaking to the people, both to the ones then living and others who were centuries in the future.

Verse 8. *Send* means to call upon one to go on some errand or to perform an important task. The Lord had a great message to be delivered to his people and called for volunteer service. Isaiah felt ready for the service since he had just been cleansed from his unworthiness by the seraphim, and he offered his services to the Lord. It is interesting to note that both the singular and plural forms of the pronoun for the Lord were used. It is the same "us" that is meant in Gen. 1: 26.

Verse 9. The condition in the nation of Israel at the time of the prophets or soon after, and what they were to be in the time of Christ and the apostles had many similarities. Because of this we will find numerous instances where a prophet will be instructed to write in such a way that his statements would apply to the Jews of both periods. The prophet might not understand the meaning of it and at times would have an inquiring mind on the subject. The illustration of the telescope will help to clarify this subject. The verse of this paragraph is one of the kind of statements just set forth above. The prophecy in this and the following verse was quoted by Jesus in Matt. 13: 14, 15 and by Paul in Acts 28: 26, 27.

Verse 10. *Make the heart* meant the prophet was to make his prediction conform to the truth as to future conditions. It is as if the Lord had said: "The heart of my people are and will be such and such, so then make your prediction accordingly." *Fat* means dull, and *heavy* means to be so disinterested that it would be a burden to listen. *Shut* is to be explained on the same principle as *make*. *Lest* means "for fear that," and the idea was that the people would be so averse to the results of accepting the Lord's will that they will shut out the means of accomplishing such results.

Verse 11. *How long* meant how long would such conditions continue as those the Lord told the prophet to predict. In answering it the Lord shortened the range of the "telescope" so as to make the scene apply only to ancient Israel. The verse means the rebellious behaviour of the people of

Israel was to continue until the calamities mentioned should be brought upon them.

Verse 12. Following the sad conditions predicted in the preceding verse, there was to be a removal of their men away into captivity. *Forsaking in the midst* is the same thought as the prediction of the *lodge* in ch. 1: 8.

Verse 13. We have seen that the great captivity was carried out in three separate movements. (see the note on page 178, volume 2 of this Commentary.) After the second action there were but a few of the people left (*a tenth*). But even this small amount of the nation was taken over at the third and final action. (see 2 Ki. 24 and 25.) *Teal* and *oak* are two varieties of large trees. Even after the foliage is stripped off of a tree, leaving it with the appearance of being dead, there is still some substance left in the body of the tree. Likewise when the flower of the nation's citizens will have been stripped from it, there was to be left still a little substance of the nation in the form of the poorer citizens. But that was to be taken off through the ravenous appetite of the invading forces.

### ISAIAH 7

Verse 1. The Lord's people were involved in dealings with foreign nations throughout their history. But since they had become two kingdoms themselves (see 1 Ki. 12: 16), they were almost continually in hostility with each other. Not only were these kingdoms often engaged in war against each other, but at certain times one of them would form a confederacy with a heathen nation and together they would come against the other kingdom of the Jews. This occurred at the time of the present verse, the confederacy being formed between the kingdom of Syria, just north of Palestine, and the kingdom of Israel (the 10 tribes). They joined their forces and made an unfriendly approach to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah (the 2 tribes). They were not able, however, to accomplish anything but throw the people into a panic of fear. This was in the days of Ahaz, king of Judah, and about twenty years after Isaiah began to write.

Verse 2. *House of David* means the kingdom of Judah or of the two tribes with its capital at Jerusalem. Word came to the people of this capital of the confederacy and unfriendly approach toward their city. *His heart*

means the heart of the people, the phrase being so worded because David had been named in direct connection with the people of the kingdom. *Was moved* means their hearts or minds trembled with fear as a tree would quiver in the wind.

Verse 3. The prophets were employed by the Lord for the purpose of immediate instruction, as well as to make short and long-distance predictions. Accordingly, Isaiah was directed to give the king of Judah some information for his consolation. He was to take his son with him and meet with the king at the end of a water course or conduit, a spot near the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

Verse 4. Upon their meeting at the designated spot, Isaiah was to bid the king of Judah not to be afraid of the foes threatening him. The two kings were compared to something very insignificant. *Firebrand* is defined by Strong as a poker used to stir a fire. In the comparison the kings were likened to only the tail ends of such pokers, and they with only enough of the fire in evidence to make a smoke.

Verse 5. These two kings not only had come against Judah, but had taken *evil counsel* against that kingdom. That meant they had consulted together or had conspired to come against Judah. Conspiracy is always considered worse than independent deeds.

Verse 6. This verse reveals the conspiracy that was formed against Judah. The conspirators proposed to break through into the city and overthrow the throne, to be reoccupied by an Ephraimite named Tabeal.

Verse 7. *It* refers to the counsel or conspiracy mentioned in the preceding verse.

Verse 8. The expressions in this and the following verse were to indicate that the forces arrayed against the city were not as important as they might appear. Not all of Syria was there, only the king who represented Damascus. As for Ephraim (representing the 10 tribes), that power was to be broken with in 65 years. The formal captivity took place in less than the stated time, hence the general wording of *within*. This event is recorded in 2 Ki. 17 which the reader should consult.

Verse 9. *Ephraim* was frequently referred to when the kingdom of the 10 tribes was meant. That was be-

cause its capital, Samaria, was located in the possession of that tribe (Josh. 16). On this point it will be well to quote Smith's Bible Dictionary: "After the revolt of Jeroboam the history of Ephraim is the history of the kingdom of Israel, since not only did the tribe become a kingdom, but the kingdom embraced little besides the tribe." For the present the only person to be considered was Pekah, Remaliah's son. He was not a strong king (see 2 Ki. 15: 29), and Ahaz was assured that little trouble would come from him. The last sentence of the verse meant that if the king of Judah would not believe the prophet's words, it was an indication that his faith in the Lord's word was weak.

Verse 10. *Lord spake* is to be understood as the speech of Isaiah speaking for God.

Verse 11. Many times the Lord has refused to grant a request for a sign or omen. We do not understand why Ahaz was bidden to call for one, but he was told to ask it in the *depth* or *height*, which meant he could ask for one ever so difficult.

Verse 12. For some reason (also unrevealed to us) Ahaz would not take advantage of the offer. He declared it would be like tempting the Lord, which might have been true had not the inspired prophet given him the privilege of asking. Since that was done, Ahaz's refusal to make the request was regarded by Isaiah as disrespectful to God.

Verse 13. Strong defines the original for *weary*, "to be disgusted." Isaiah told Ahaz (representing the *house of David*) that he not only was disgusting to man but also to the Lord. That was because he had been told to ask for a sign but had refused to do so. His refusal indicated that either he doubted the ability of the inspired prophet to give an omen, or that it would not be of much importance. He should have considered the wisdom of the Lord and that no inspired predictions in whatever form were unimportant. Since the sign intended to be given would be for the benefit of others besides the king of Judah, the Lord decreed to give it in spite of the attitude of this disrespectful king.

Verse 14. This and the two following verses should be marked into a bracket, and the subject noted as a prophecy of Christ (Matt. 1: 23). This prophecy was to be fulfilled many centuries after all the persons then

living were dead. However, another prediction was soon to be made that would be fulfilled in the time of that generation. That should help them to believe the truthfulness of this other prediction that was to be fulfilled in the distant future. We shall now consider the verses of the bracket in their order. The significant thought is that the child was to be born of a virgin. A virgin might conceive at her first relation with a man and thus no miracle would be performed. But from that instant she would not be a virgin. Hence, when her child should be born it could not be said that he was born of a virgin. But in the case of this verse, the child was to be both conceived and born of a virgin. *Immanuel* in the Old Testament and *Emmanuel* in the New both mean "God is with us."

Verse 15. *That he may know* means he will eat this stronger food, such as butter and honey, when he becomes old enough to know right from wrong. Before that he will live on the same kind of food as other infants. Notwithstanding Jesus was the Son of God, while he was in the flesh he was subject to all the laws of nature as pertaining to physical and mental growth as was others. (See Luke 2: 40, 52.)

Verse 16. This verse is where the two predictions were made that were related to each other, though their fulfillments were destined to be hundreds of years apart. Such unusual form of language is a part of the prophetic style. It will serve to clarify the thought to make the language read, "Before—yes, long before," etc. But the fulfillment of one of the predictions was to come not so long after the time Isaiah made the prediction, and it pertained to the two kings who were at that very time causing Ahaz to be so worried. The fulfillment of it is recorded in 2 Ki. 16: 9; 17: 6.

Verse 17. The prophet next turned his attention to the fate of Judah and her captivity. He called it *Assyria* because at the time of the writing the land was in control of that people, although destined to be in the hands of the Babylonians at the time Judah was to be invaded and taken away into captivity.

Verse 18. *In that day* means that about the time all these calamities were coming upon his people from the Babylonians, God would bring other people into the land to worry

his disobedient nation. *Hiss* means to whistle as if to make a shrill call for the foreigners to come. *Fly* and *bee* are used figuratively, referring to the swarms or hordes of the heathen who were to be called into the service of God to chastise his people. *Assyria* is explained at v. 17.

Verse 19. This invasion was fulfilled as predicted, and the record of it is in 2 Ki. 23: 33-35.

Verse 20. The king of Assyria (Babylon) is figuratively called a razor because that instrument is used to rid a body of some of its parts. *Head, feet* and *beard* were named to indicate the completeness of the predicted invasion. To use a familiar expression, the disobedient people of Judah were to have a "close shave."

Verse 21. The predictions were still on the subject of the Babylonian invasion and the shortages that were to be forced upon the land in punishment for its iniquities. A man who had been the owner of great herds of cattle would be reduced to one cow and two sheep, and would have to be satisfied with that amount of living source.

Verse 22. God did not intend to starve his people to death in their own country, but only that they should suffer many inconveniences. Hence this small number of beasts would supply their owner with sufficient to keep him alive, in conjunction with the honey that was produced wild in the land.

Verse 23. This verse is a description of the reduced state the land would be in as a result of the invasion from the Babylonians. *Silverlings* means the money paid for the vines that grew in abundance. In their place were to come briars and thorns.

Verse 24. The *arrows* and *bows* were to be used by the heathen invaders. That would throw the land into the state of desolation described because not enough men would be left to keep down the thorns and briars.

Verse 25. We must understand this verse in the light of the preceding ones. Men will not be seen working with tools to rid the hills of the briars, but the territory will be neglected and run over by the animals.

### ISAIAH 8

Verse 1. The *roll* to be used was in the nature of a board or other hard and flat surface, and the *pen* was an instrument somewhat like a graver's

tool, Isaiah was to carve the words on this board which would give it a more permanent form. All of this indicates the great importance of the subject at hand.

Verse 2. *Record* means literally to duplicate what is seen. The witnesses would be able to reproduce what Isaiah engraved on the board, if necessary, since they saw what was done. They could testify to the agreement of their copy with the original.

Verse 3. *Prophetess* is from NEBIYAH, and Strong defines it, "a prophetess or (generally) inspired woman; by implication a poetess; by association a prophet's wife." The connection indicates the last part of the definition applies here. There was nothing miraculous in this relation of the prophet with his wife, unless it was the fact that a child was caused to result from his particular relation, and that it was caused to be a son. After the birth of the son the Lord told the prophet what to call him. But that name had been inscribed on the board and witnessed by the men selected for that purpose. The proper names used in Bible times usually had some special significance. The one which the Lord instructed Isaiah to call his infant son is defined in Strong's lexicon as follows: "hasting (is he [the enemy—Strong] to the) booty, swift (to the) prey." In other words it means the enemy was to be hasty in coming for his prey, and the name was given to this son as an omen of the near approach of the fulfillment of the prediction against Damascus and Samaria.

Verse 4. This verse predicted the invasion of the Assyrians into the territories of Damascus, capital of Syria, and of Samaria, capital of the 10 tribes. The fulfillment of these events is recorded in 2 Ki. 16: 9; 17: 6. That was in 740 B.C. and this son was born in that year. But before the child was old enough to talk this prediction was carried out.

Verse 5. The form of this verse shows the manner in which Isaiah was inspired.

Verse 6. *Shiloah* was a soft-flowing stream near Jerusalem. It is called "Siloam" in the New Testament. The reference to it was figurative and contrasted with another stream that will be considered in the next verse. But for the present verse, the Lord represented his people as preferring the boisterous atmosphere created by



the presence of the hostile kings named, to that of the quiet and gentle stream.

Verse 7. Continuing his figurative use of the streams, the Lord said if his people desired something stronger or more vigorous than the quiet waters of Shiloah, he would bring upon them the waters of the river which referred to the Euphrates. This mighty river flowed in the country then controlled by the Assyrians. Of course this river was not literally to be run over the land of Judah, but the figure was continued that was introduced in the preceding verse. The people in possession of this river were to be brought up over the land of God's dissatisfied nation, and their channels and banks were to be (figuratively) overflowed.

Verse 8. The language is still in terms of waters and flood. This greater stream was to overflow the land until it would be neck deep. *Immanuel* means "God with us," and is used in this place to indicate the land of God's people which was to be overflowed. *He* and *his* refer to the king of Assyria, who was ruler over the nation that was destined to bring the overflow mentioned above. The first definition of the original for *wings* is "an edge or extremity." The thought is that the king of Assyria would overrun the extreme limits of the land of Judah. The fulfillment of this prediction may be read in 2 Ki. 18: 13-16.

Verse 9. This verse was a warning against the heathen people. The thought was as if it said, "though you associate or conspire together against us, ye shall be broken in pieces by the strength of the God whom you oppose."

Verse 10. This verse has practically the same meaning as the preceding one. The counsel and boastful words of the enemy were not to stand, because God would still be with his people whom he loved. (Rom. 8: 31.)

Verse 11. Isaiah was in the midst of a corrupt people and the Lord gave him an exhortation. One does not literally speak with his hand, but *with a strong hand* means God spoke to the prophet with great force, and warned him not to walk in the way of the people among whom he was compelled to live as a prophet.

Verse 12. If the people suggested that a confederacy be formed, Isaiah was not to agree with them. If they

tried to influence him by raising a cry of fear, he was not to give heed to them but trust in the protection of his God.

Verse 13. The only power the prophet was to fear was that of the Lord, and that was the fear caused by his reverence for Him. *Sanctify the Lord* means to pronounce or observe or regard the Lord as being pure and holy.

Verse 14. This and the following four verses should be marked into a bracket and understood as a prophecy relating to Christ and his followers. The second word of this verse is a pronoun standing for Christ. *Sanctuary* means a consecrated place and such was the presence of Christ to be for those who would trust in him. But some would not believe in him and they would stumble at his word; this prediction was cited in 1 Pe. 2: 8. *Both houses of Israel* referred to the two parts of the nation that formed the kingdoms known as Israel and Judah. A *gin* was a net spread out so wide that one could scarcely avoid being entangled with it. A *snare* was a trap set in some hidden place that would catch the unwary. Both contrivances were used to illustrate the lot of those who would be averse to Christ and his teaching.

Verse 15. This verse itemizes the results of being caught in the gin or snare described in the preceding verse.

Verse 16. The pronoun is in the first person and represents Christ as telling what he would do for those who would accept him. He would *bind up* or *seal the law* which means he would guarantee his word on behalf of his disciples, which means those who would become learners and followers of his teaching.

Verse 17. *I* means Christ and the *Lord* means God who was hiding his face from the house of Jacob. (see v. 14.) Christ would *wait upon*, which means he would respect God's attitude toward the rebellious Jews.

Verse 18. This verse is cited by the writer of Heb. 2: 13. The prediction was that Christ was to be given a group of persons who would accept his teaching. *Signs and wonders in Israel* means the effect it would have on the houses of Israel in general to see men and women accepting the teaching of Christ. One instance of its fulfillment is recorded in Matt. 7: 28, 29.

Verse 19. This prophecy of Christ was ended with the preceding verse

and God again advised the prophet on his conduct among that corrupt people. Since they were inclined to go after wizards and those with familiar spirits, they would likely try to interest the prophet in them. The last part of the verse means that living people should consult God for information and not appeal to the spirits of the dead.

Verse 20. "But it might be desirable to obtain information that would be beneficial; would that not justify one's consulting these persons for that purpose?" To this imaginary question the Lord answered in the language of the present verse. *The law and the testimony* of God was in their possession and would supply all the information needed. "But suppose these characters would offer some information different from what could be found in the written law?" Then that would be proof that they were a group of deceivers, and described here as having *no light in them*.

Verse 21. This verse describes the lot of those who practice witchcraft or who follow after such who do. They will come to realize their utter failure and unworthiness, and curse the king and God and be generally against everything that is good.

Verse 22. This verse continues the description of the characters who deal in witchcraft, and those who consult them instead of the law.

### ISAIAH 9

Verse 1. I earnestly request the reader to make frequent reference to the illustration of the telescope at the beginning of this book. The line of predictions will many times be interrupted in order to let the prophet see far into the future. The telescope was extended in this and several other verses in this chapter, enabling the prophet to see some things that would take place in the time of Christ. *Nevertheless* was an introduction to a contrast between conditions in the country at the time of the invasion by the heathen and what they would be in that future time. In the former time the land was dim from lack of receiving the light of God's law. The places named in this verse were in the territory of the kingdom of the 10 tribes, which was the victim of the invading forces. But the prophet saw better things coming for it.

Verse 2. *Have seen* is past in form although referring to the future. This

is the prophetic style and it is explained in "general remarks" at the beginning of this book. The *light* meant that which was to be shed by the teaching of Christ. We know this is the interpretation of this prediction for it is so applied in Matt. 4: 12-16.

Verse 3. *Not increased* is rendered "to him increased" in the margin. Both Moffatt's translation and the American Standard Version also render the place by that thought, and the context agrees with it. Certainly, by favoring those districts with the teaching of Jesus it would add to their joy. The increase of their joy was compared to that produced by a good harvest or a victory over a foe and taking the prey.

Verse 4. The sad situation imposed upon these territories by the invading forces was to have been removed. The relief thus afforded was compared to that enjoyed by the Lord's people in the time of the judges, when the Midianites were driven to defeat on behalf of Israel. This event may be read in Judg. 7: 22.

Verse 5. This verse gives a strong description of the conflicts of God's people in the past, in which they had to contend with the enemy amid the shedding of blood. But those enemies were finally subdued and their forces given over to their own destruction, even as fuel is fed to the fire. After such a victorious recovery from their ancient enemies, their lot suggested the propriety of a prediction concerning the redemption from the oppression of sin. Such a redemption was to be accomplished through the means of a most unusual person to be brought into the world. We may here see the reason for the Lord's extending the "telescope" so that the prophet could see and describe that great person which will be the subject of the next two verses.

Verse 6. This and the next verse gives us one of the great predictions of the coming of Christ. Of course all predictions of him are great, but this one contains so many of the characteristics that were peculiar to him. Not only was a child to be born to the race but that child was to be a son. That was one of the most important qualifications expected of a ruler. A yoke is used to compare a government (Matt. 11: 29, 30), and since that instrument was borne upon the shoulder of the creature using it, the government was said here to be

upon his shoulder. Wonderful is from *PELE* which Strong defines, "a miracle." That was true of Christ in many respects, but especially was it true with regard to his birth which was accomplished by a virgin, predicted in ch. 7: 14. *Counsellor* is from *YAWATS* and defined by Strong, "to advise; reflectively to deliberate or resolve." This definition surely belonged to Christ for he was the greatest teacher ever to be on earth. *Mighty God* will not confuse us when we remember that "God" is the family name of the Deity and that Christ was a mighty member of that family. *Father* is from *AWB* and Strong's definition is "a primitive word; father in a literal and immediate, or figurative and remote application." Certainly the last part of the definition is the sense of the word here for Jesus was not literally a father. But his great and unending care for the children of his own divine Father would entitle him to the name. The original for *prince* is defined, "a head person," and it has been rendered in the King James version by captain, chief, general, master and others. Many such men in temporal life were interested in conflicts for personal advantage. This great person was to be a prince who would offer peace to his subjects. This word is from *SHALOM* and defined by Strong, "safe, i.e. (figuratively) well, happy, friendly; also (abstractly) welfare, i.e. health, prosperity, peace." It can thus be seen that Christ was to give to his subjects that kind of peace that would be for their good, even if they might have to receive it in connection with unpleasant experiences with the world.

Verse 7. The government of this ruler was to have no end, which was also predicted in Dan. 2: 44. He was to sit upon the throne of David in that he was a lineal descendant of that great king of Judah. It was his *kingdom* in the same sense as it was his throne. The throne and kingdom of David was a restricted one in that it admitted only the fleshly members of the nation. But God had promised David that he would have a son or descendant who would be a king over all the people who would accept his yoke (Psa. 132: 10-12). All of these predictions were to be brought to pass through the *zeal of the Lord of hosts*.

Verse 8. The "telescope" was shortened to its normal length and the prophet saw more that pertained to ancient *Jacob* and *Israel*. These two

names were used because the first is the head and the second is the people that sprang from that head.

Verse 9. *Ephraim* and *Samaria* are explained in connection with ch. 7: 1-9. Those people were rebellious against the Lord and pretended not to have any fear of the future.

Verse 10. Their boasts were described in figurative language. They spoke as if the threatened overthrow of their kingdom might be like losing a brick structure, but they would be able to replace it with a better one. Or, their present situation might be like a sycamore tree, and though it would be cut down they would replace it with the beautiful cedar, a kind of tree that was prized very highly for its grain.

Verse 11. Against this boastful arrogance God threatened to raise up enemies. The phrase *adversaries of Rezin* has the sense as if it said "adversaries, consisting of Rezin," etc. *Join his enemies* meant that God would bring more than one group of enemies against his people for their stubbornness in resisting the divine law.

Verse 12. This verse names two heathen nations that were to be raised against the Lord's stubborn people; the Syrians on one hand and the Philistines on the other. The first is recorded in 2 Ki. 16: 6, and the second is in 2 Chr. 28: 18. See the comments at ch. 5: 25 for explanation of the last sentence.

Verse 13. This verse was given to account for the statement at the close of the preceding verse. God's anger was continued against the people (of Israel) because they turned not unto him (the Lord) who was smiting or chastising them. They were not willing to seek the *Lord of hosts*. The last word means large groups of men, especially an army. This would be true from more than one standpoint. The Lord is able to defeat an army of enemies and thus prove his ability to be a Lord or power over them, and he also has under him a large group of servants who would fight for the right cause.

Verse 14. In the great chastisement that God decreed to bring upon the nation, no exception was to be made of any class, all were to take their share of the national humiliation. (see note at page 174, Vol. 2 of this Commentary.) But at least the better individuals were to be shown some con-

sideration in the illustration by being called the head, while the others were called the tail.

Verse 15. The general classification in the preceding verse is made specific in this, and it shows that character and conduct determined it. Thus the honorable people were put at the head while the lying prophet made up the tail.

Verse 16. The leaders were always held especially to blame, yet the people in general were made to share in the condemnation for following them. Jesus taught this same principle while he was on the earth. (Matt. 15: 14.)

Verse 17. About all rules have some exceptions, and there were some good men in the Jewish nation. But the group as a whole had become corrupt, both old and young. Hence the Lord made this severe decree against them, which was appropriate for the age classes mentioned. Had the young men been righteous, God would have had joy in them because they would have been the strength and defence of the nation. Had the widows and other unfortunates been good, the Lord would have shown them special favor in the nature of mercy. (See ch. 5: 25 for explanation of the last sentence.)

Verse 18. Ordinarily we would count it a favor to have briars and thorns destroyed. The thought in this verse is to show the completeness of God's wrath against the moral and spiritual wild growth in the conduct of the people.

Verse 19. This verse helps to understand the preceding one. The wicked people were the briars that were to be destroyed by the wrath of the Lord.

Verse 20. The pronoun *he* refers to *brother* in the preceding verse. He is represented as *snatching* here and there to find something to eat but failing to find it. The extremes of destitution are pictured as a man eating his own flesh in his hunger.

Verse 21. *Manasseh, Ephraim*. The full meaning would be that in their distress even the various tribes would attack each other, *no man shall spare his brother* (v. 19), and even the two kingdoms will suffer by the treatment accorded each other through the discouraging situation. (See ch. 5: 25 for notes on the last sentence.)

### ISAIAH 10

Verse 1. This woe was directed against the leaders of the nation who oppressed the common people. They

did it by forcing such decrees upon them that it grieved them.

Verse 2. This verse has practically the same meaning as the preceding one, and as the thoughts in vs. 14-16 in the preceding chapter.

Verse 3. Most of Isaiah's writing was against Judah, but he also paid some attention to Israel (the 10 tribes), whose downfall had just taken place when the prophet began to write this chapter. *Day of visitation* referred to the invasion *from far*, which meant the army of the Assyrians.

Verse 4. *Without me* was a notice that when the invasion came, the Lord would not help them. *Under the prisoners* and *under the slain* was used in the sense of being among the prisoners and the slain persons. In other words, when the invasion comes there will be no chance to escape with their property. They will be brought down in helplessness along with the others of the nation. And even this will not be the end of their chastisement from God, but his anger will be further felt. (See ch. 5: 25.)

Verse 5. God was going to use the Assyrian army to chastise his wayward nation, even as a father would use a rod to punish his disobedient son.

Verse 6. This prediction was fulfilled as recorded in 2 Kl. 18: 14-16. Let not the reader mistake that event for the captivity of Judah. That was a century in the future yet and was to be accomplished through the Babylonians. But the present prediction had to do with a temporary chastisement of Judah at the hands of Assyria.

Verse 7. *He meaneth not so*. The Assyrians had just carried the 10 tribes off into captivity. They were elated over their success and concluded to accomplish the same thing with Judah. The italicized words mean the Assyrians did not attack Judah for the purpose of serving God as an instrument to punish the evil nation. Their motive was the same with which they attacked other nations, and that was for the military and political purpose of overthrowing the nations. But that motive did not prevent God from using the occasion to give his wayward people a severe punishment. Many of the following verses specify some particulars of the boastful motive of the Assyrians, that brought the wrath of God down upon them also, after he had used them for his own pur-



pose. Before going on with that line of verses, I shall quote from authentic history to show the correctness of the statements about Assyria, and the fulfillment of the threats the prophet was inspired to predict against her: "Saracus, who came to the throne towards the end of the 7th century B. C., was the last of the long line of Assyrian kings. For nearly or quite six centuries the Ninevite kings had now lorded it over the East. There was scarcely a state in all Western Asia that during this time had not, in the language of the royal inscriptions 'borne the heavy yoke of their lordship,' scarcely a people that had not suffered their cruel punishments, or tasted the bitterness of enforced exile. But now swift misfortunes were bearing down upon the oppressor from every quarter. Egypt revolted and tore Syria away from the empire; from the mountain defiles on the east issued the armies of the recent-grown empire of the Aryan Medes, led by the renowned Cyaxares; from the southern lowlands, anxious to aid in the overthrow of the hated oppressor, the Babylonians joined the Medes as allies, and together they laid close siege to Nineveh [capital of Assyria]. The city was finally taken and sacked, and dominion passed away forever from the proud capital. Two hundred years later, when Xenophon with his Ten Thousand Greeks, in his memorable retreat passed the spot, the once great city was a crumbling mass of ruins of which he could not even learn the name." MYERS, *Ancient History*, p. 66.

Verse 8. Assyria claimed that her princes or leading men were as good as kings.

Verse 9. The first four cities named had been taken over by the Assyrian power. Samaria, the capital of the 10 tribes, and Damascus, the capital of Syria, had also been taken over. (See 2 Ki. 16: 9; 17: 6.)

Verse 10. One word in the lexicon definition of the original for *found* is "acquired," and here means the Assyrians had taken over the kingdoms that worshiped idols, referring to the heathen nations. *Images did excel* was said to indicate the power of the Assyrians over the idols of greater strength. And since the idols of Jerusalem and Samaria were of less power, then surely he (the Assyrian) would be able to take them, and his boastful attitude was based on this consideration.

Verse 11. Assyria thought the idols of Samaria were superior to those of Jerusalem, but such a conclusion was purely unfounded in fact, for none of the idols had any actual force except in the imagination of the worshippers. Having overcome the former idols he thought he would have no trouble with the latter.

Verse 12. The four preceding verses were the boast of Assyria concerning her treatment of Judah and Jerusalem, not realizing that God was only using her as an instrument for chastising his own disobedient children. Hence God now declared what he would do after he has finished his work upon his own nation. He said he would punish (cut short) the fruit (plans) of the stout (proud) heart of the king of Assyria. This threat was fulfilled as per the historical quotation at verse 7 above.

Verse 13. In this and the following verse Assyria's boasts are again recounted. About all of the things claimed to have been done were so, but the error was in her boast that it was by *my hand* that the work was accomplished.

Verse 14. Assyria's boast was likened to one's finding a nest with eggs and taking them for his own use. The fowl that deposited the eggs did not so much as move a wing nor even peep in protest. Likewise when Assyria helped herself to the spoils of the nations the owners thereof were not able to make any effective protest.

Verse 15. The unreasonableness of Assyria's boast was compared to that of an ax boasting about the work of skill that it had accomplished. The like comparison was made to various other implements of work.

Verse 16. This verse was a prediction of what God was to bring against Assyria. The things threatened referred to the defeat of Assyria at the hands of her enemies and the fulfillment is recorded in the historical quotation at verse 7.

Verse 17. The pronouns in the verse stand for Israel and Assyria. The *Holy One* of Israel, the Lord, shall be a destructive fire. This fire shall devour the (national or political) thorns and briars of the Assyrian army.

Verse 18. A standardbearer is an outstanding character in an army or nation. *Forest and field, soul and body*, are used figuratively. The meaning is that the Assyrians were to be completely defeated.

Verse 19. This verse was intended as a continuation of the figures of speech on the complete overthrow of Assyria. The number of her military and other important men were to be so reduced that a child could describe them.

Verse 20. *That day* refers to the day when the people of Israel were to be released from captivity. The prediction was fulfilled and the record of it is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. *No more stay upon* means that Israel will not depend upon his captor but will depend upon the Lord. This was especially true as regards to idolatry. After the captivity the Jewish nation never committed idolatry. For the historical quotation on this subject see the comments at ch. 1: 25.

Verse 21. The *remnant* was a prediction of the small number of Jews who survived the captivity and returned to their home country. (See Ezra 2: 64.)

Verse 22. The reference to a *remnant* is the same thought that was expressed in the preceding verse. The *consumption* means the effects the captivity would have in decreasing the number of the Jews. Overflow with righteousness means it would be a righteous thing for the chastisement to come upon the nation, even though it did reduce them to a mere remnant.

Verse 23. The *consumption* that was to come would not be a mere chance or accident. The Lord had determined to bring the punishment upon them for their corruption.

Verse 24. Many of the things being threatened in several verses had a general bearing and included the effect of the great 70-year captivity. But the immediate subject was the situation created by the presence and threatening attitude of the Assyrian army. That situation is recorded in 2 Ki. 18, and came after the 10 tribes had been taken off by the Assyrians. Having been so successful they were encouraged to think they could accomplish the same thing with Judah or the 2 tribes. But their success was to be short, and God wished his people not to be unduly alarmed over it.

Verse 25. This verse predicts that it would be but a little while until the *indignation* (of God against his people) would cease. His anger was to cease in *their* (the Assyrians) *destruction*. In other words, when the destruction or overthrow of the As-

syrians will have been accomplished, God's anger will be satisfied and it will cease.

Verse 26. A *scourge* means something that will serve as a punishment, and the one predicted here was fulfilled by the hand of the Assyrian army (2 Ki. 19: 35). The Lord was to be the one who would use the lash and thus would force the Assyrians to serve Him. The reference to the slaughter of the Midianites (Judg. 7: 25) was to illustrate the severity of the chastisement God meant to inflict upon the Assyrians. The reference to the *rod upon the sea* (Ex. 14: 26) was to illustrate God's defeat of the Assyrian plans, even as the plans of Egypt were defeated when the rod was stretched out over the sea that was about to hinder the Israelites from escaping.

Verse 27. This verse is still on the specific subject of Assyria's yoke of terror that has been the theme for several verses.

Verse 28. *He* refers to the Assyrian who will be forced to leave the land of Judah and retreat toward his own country. The towns named were places through which the Assyrians would pass in their return, defeated, to their own territory.

Verse 29. These are some more spots in the route of the retreat. As they swept through the various territories they spread fear among the natives, some of whom fled.

Verse 30. The condition of fear continued to be the subject of the prediction. *Gallim*, *Laish* and *Anathoth* were in the path of the retreating army.

Verse 31. This verse names two other places that were to be in the path.

Verse 32. The retreat of the Assyrian army was with reluctance; if it could delay the march out of the country it would do so. *Nob* was an important city in the possession of Benjamin (one tribe of the kingdom of Judah), and the Assyrian army paused there to make a parting "fling" at the nation they were being forced to leave.

Verse 33. *Bough*, *high ones* and *haughty* refers to the leaders of the Assyrian nation who had been puffed up against God's people. The Lord would finally subject those arrogant people to a humiliating defeat as if the boughs of a tree were lopped off.

Verse 34. The leveling of the things mentioned in this verse is figurative. However, the reference to Lebanon is literal as to the location. That place had been in the possession of the 10 tribes previous to the captivity of Israel, but after the kingdom was taken by the Assyrians the territory was in the control of the victorious nation. Therefore any damage done to it would be a chastisement of Assyria.

### ISAIAH 11

Verse 1. Verses 1-10 should be marked into a bracket and labeled "kingdom of Christ." The many important items connected with that subject will be studied as the verses are taken in their order. Jesse was one of the more prominent ancestors of Christ. He was the father of the first righteous king that the Israelites had (Ruth 4: 22; 1 Sam. 13: 14; 16: 1), and he is the ancestor specified in the present imagery because the fate of kingdoms was the immediate subject of the prophecy. The kingdom of the descendants of Jesse was destined to be defeated as far as its earthly importance was concerned. But this great ancestor of that kingdom had a far more important part to play in the great drama of the Lord's scheme of things. The apparent defeat of that kingly line was compared to the cutting down of a tree but where the plant was not killed. The figures of speech used were to illustrate the renewal of the tree in a more glorious form. *Rod* is defined by Strong as "a twig," and *stem* is defined "a stump." *Branch* means "a shoot" that springs up from the roots of the stump that was left after the tree had been cut down. And so, although the tree of Jesse's kingdom was to be overthrown, he was destined to have a "new start in life" by the shoot that would spring up from the same line. Of course we know that shoot was Christ who descended through Jesse and David.

Verse 2. For the specific meaning of *Lord* see the comments at Psa. 86: 12. In this verse it means God the Father, and *him* means his Son Jesus. The Father was to give his Son the spirit that would impart unto him all the qualifications named. There is not much difference between the meaning of the words, yet there may be seen some variation that would serve to emphasize them. For instance, *understanding* would mean he would have a comprehension of a subject, and

*wisdom* would mean he would use it properly; *knowledge* refers to the subject of information in general. *Fear of the Lord* denotes the respect this Son would show for his Father.

Verse 3. *Quick* is not in the original as a separate word. It is rendered "smell" in the margin and both the lexicon and other passages in the King James version agree. It is the word for "smell" in Ex. 30: 38; Lev. 26: 31; Psa. 115: 6. The word is also defined as "accept" in the lexicon. The meaning of the passage is that Christ would recognize the quality of understanding when he smelled it and would accept it because of his fear or respect for the Lord. The latter part of the verse means he would not decide matters by the mere outward appearances.

Verse 4. The judgments or decisions concerning the poor were to be righteous, and he would reason with *equity* (fairness) with the humble. *Thy smiting* and *slaying* was figurative and referred to the force of Christ's words against workers of evil.

Verse 5. *Loins* is from *MOTHEN*, which Strong defines, "the waist or small of the back," and as a girdle will give support by the being attached around one's waist, so the righteousness of Christ was to be a strong recommendation for him in the eyes of those who would behold him. *Reins* is from *CHALATS* and is defined, "the loins as the seat of vigor." The clause means that Christ would be strong in his service for humanity because of his own faithful life. (See Heb. 2: 18; 4: 15.)

Verse 6. The reader will certainly understand that none of these dumb beasts will literally have anything to do with the kingdom of Christ. The situation with such creatures was used to illustrate the spiritual peace and safety to be enjoyed by the citizens of that kingdom. It was to be true that the most vicious of human characters would become friendly toward the opposite kind because of their common relation to Christ and their interest in each other. If a child would be able safely to lead or herd these beasts that had formerly been dangerous, it would illustrate the civilizing influence of the Gospel upon the hearts and lives of mankind.

Verse 7. This verse uses different creatures for the illustration, but the meaning is the same as that of the preceding verses.

Verse 8. *Asp* and *cockatrice* are varieties of poisonous snakes. The safe and peaceful condition (spiritually) in the kingdom of Christ was illustrated by this harmony between the babes and the poisonous creatures.

Verse 9. *Mountain* in prophetic and figurative language means government, and here referred to the government or kingdom of Christ. *Shall not hurt* has the same meaning as several preceding verses. *Earth shall be full* is a prediction of the final and complete extension of the Gospel throughout the world. This prediction was fulfilled according to Rom. 10: 18; 16: 26; Col. 1: 23.

Verse 10. For explanation of *root of Jesse* see the comments at verse one. *Ensign* is from a word that means a "signal or token" and referred to the Gospel of Christ that was to be the token of good will and salvation offered by this descendant of Jesse. *Gentiles* is from *gor* and its fundamental definition is "nations or people." In its application at this place it means the people of the world generally, hence not to one race only as was the system under Moses.

Verse 11. The preceding verse closed the bracket for the kingdom of Christ, and the "telescope" was returned in its range to the more immediate time of the prophet and his vision concerning ancient Israel. This verse predicted the recovery of the "remnant" that will have survived the strain of the captivity. Mention is made of some other countries besides Babylon or Assyria. That is because some straggling Israelites were found in some of these places although the bulk of the nation of the Jews was in the region of Assyria first, then of Babylon.

Verse 12. This verse refers to the same facts as that of the preceding one, and it was fulfilled when the Jews were permitted to return to their own land.

Verse 13. *Ephraim* refers to the 10 tribes (see comments at ch. 7: 2, 9) and *Judah* to the 2 tribes. Formerly these two kingdoms had been at enmity against each other, and also both had been envied by other nations. After the captivity this was changed and the 12 tribes were united as one nation back in Palestine. This great fact was predicted in clear language also in Ezk. 37: 15-22. The familiar doctrine of "the lost 10

tribes" has no foundation in prophecy or history.

Verse 14. After the 12 tribes were again settled in their own land they were to override the heathen nations named in this verse. During the absence of the tribes in their captivity, these foreign people had taken advantage of the situation and helped themselves to the territories before them.

Verse 15. The phraseology of the first clause of this verse is based on the ancient escape of Israel from Egyptian bondage. *Tongue* is from *ISHOMAH* and the part of Strong's definition that applies here is, "used figuratively (speech, an ingot, a fork of flame, a cove of water)." The last phrase is the meaning used in this verse. The Red Sea was depended upon by the Egyptians to protect them from the loss of their servants, the Israelites. But the Lord *utterly destroyed* that hope by opening up through it a way of escape. And as the Lord overcame the barrier of the sea with the wind (Ex. 14: 21), so he will master the obstruction of the river (the Euphrates) that would seem to be an obstacle in the way of Israel's escape from their bondage in Babylon. The feat was accomplished by lowering the stream through the strategy of Cyrus. The historical record of this feat will be found in connection with the comments at ch. 45: 1. *Seven streams* was used because seven in symbolic language means completeness. The Euphrates River was such a mighty stream that it would seem to be a complete barrier against the escape of the captives.

Verse 16. *Assyria* is used in the same sense as was explained at ch. 7: 18. The escape of God's people from this country is compared to their deliverance from Egypt.

## ISAIAH 12

Verse 1. This verse is a prophecy with a twofold bearing. Its first application is to the recovery of Israel from the sad condition of the captivity. The "telescope" was then extended to reach into the time and work of Christ.

Verse 2. The *salvation* was also twofold as per the first verse. The first was a national salvation from the state of captivity, and the next referred to the spiritual salvation to be offered to mankind through Christ.

Verse 3. This promise was cited by



Jesus in John 7: 38, and it referred to the living water of truth that He would give to all who would accept it. The result of this living water would be the salvation of all who would drink of it.

Verse 4. It was true that when Jesus gave the truth into the world, many took up the sweet story and told it to others.

Verse 5. *Known in all the world* was a prediction that the Gospel of Christ was to be made known throughout the world. This was accomplished under the commission given to the apostles according to Matt. 28: 26; Mark 16: 15; Rom. 10: 18; Col. 1: 23.

Verse 6. Zion was the most important district in Jerusalem and was the capital of the Jewish kingdom; it in turn became the birthplace of the kingdom of Christ. It was therefore proper that the inhabitants of this place should rejoice with shouting. Their joy would be based on such glorious promises that meant so much to them.

### ISAIAH 13

Verse 1. God's ancient people had so many dealings with the heathen nations existing at the same time that the inspired prophets were called upon to write concerning them. Some of their writings were in the form of admonition and others were predictions concerning their fate. An occasional favor was predicted for the few good people who had respected the Lord and his servants, but most of them were threats to bring some punishment for their wickedness and misuse of the people of God. *Burden* is from MASSA and the part of Strong's definition that applies here is, "an utterance, chiefly a doom." Hence the expression means that Babylon will have to bear the burden of the doom that the prophet was about to predict. Some of the predictions against *Babylon* had reference to the kingdom as a whole, and others applied especially to the city which was the capital of that mighty government. However, in any case, the destruction of the city would mean the overthrow of the kingdom. I shall here quote from ancient history a description of the destruction of the city. "Concerning the complete destruction of the city of Babylon, the city ceased to be a royal city, the kings of Persia choosing to reside elsewhere. They delighted more in Shushan, Ecbatana, Persepolis, or any

other place, and did themselves destroy a great part of Babylon. . . . The new kings of Persia, who afterwards became masters of Babylon, completed the ruin of it, by building Ctesiphon, which carried away all the remainder of the inhabitants. . . . She was totally forsaken, that nothing of her was left remaining but the walls. And to this condition was she reduced at the time when Pausanias wrote his remarks upon Greece. . . . The kings of Persia, finding the place deserted, made a park of it, in which they kept wild beasts for hunting. . . . Instead of citizens, it was now inhabited by wild boars, leopards, bears, deer and wild asses. Babylon was now the retreat of fierce, savage, deadly creatures, that hate the light, and delight in darkness. . . . But it was still too much that the walls of Babylon were still standing. At length, they fell down in several places, and were never repaired. Various accidents destroyed the remainder. The animals, which served for pleasure for the Persian kings, abandoned the place; serpents and scorpions remained, so that it became a dreadful place for persons that should have curiosity to visit, or search after its antiquities. The Euphrates that used to run through the city, having no longer a free channel, took its course another way, so that, in Theodoret's time, there was but a very little stream of water left, which ran across the ruins, and, not meeting with a descent or free passage, necessarily expanded into a marsh. In the time of Alexander the Great the river had left its ordinary channel, by reason of the outlets and canals which Cyrus had made, and of which we already have given an account; these outlets, being all stopped up, had occasioned a great inundation in the country. Alexander, designing to fix the seat of his empire at Babylon, projecting the bringing back the Euphrates into its natural and former channel had actually set his men to work. But the Almighty, who watched over the fulfilling of his prophecy, defeated this enterprise by the death of Alexander, which happened soon after. It is easy to comprehend how, after this, Babylon being neglected to such a degree as we have seen, its river was converted into an inaccessible pool. . . . By means of these changes, Babylon became an utter desert, and all the country around fell into the same state of desolation and horror; so that the ablest geographers at this

day (A.D. 1729) cannot determine the place where it stood." Rollin's Ancient History, v. 1, pp. 558-560. Additional information concerning the destruction of the kingdom of Babylon may be found in Myers Ancient History, pp. 93, 275-285.

Verse 2. A *banner* is an ensign indicating the presence or coming of some army or other power. The prediction here was concerning the power of the hosts of the Lord that were to subdue Babylon. *Go into the gates of the nobles* indicated the entrance into the strongholds of the enemy that God's forces would accomplish.

Verse 3. *Sanctified ones* would apply to whomsoever the Lord designated to act for him in the overthrow of Babylon. In the present case it was to consist of the Persians as we have seen in the quotation from the history in v. 1 above.

Verse 4. The subject matter of this verse is the same as the preceding ones. The tumult and disturbance described referred to that of the gathering army outside of Babylon. It is said that *the Lord of hosts* was to do this, because it was by His decree that the Persians were to overthrow the Babylonians.

Verses 5, 6. The rulers and citizens of Babylon were told to *howl* because of the destruction that was to be brought to them. They were informed that it was to come from the Almighty whom we understand to mean the Lord.

Verse 7, 8. This bracket follows close to the predictions of the preceding verses. It was specifically focused upon the final event that marked the overthrow of Babylon, and that was the memorable death of Belshazzar and his thousand lords. The Biblical account of this event is in Dan. 5: 6, 9. But this epoch in the affairs of the nations was so significant as touching the prophecies of the Bible that I shall quote at length from secular history, that my readers who do not have access to the sources may have the information here. This and other lengthy quotations from secular productions will be quoted only once in this Commentary in order to conserve space. The reader is therefore earnestly requested to make careful note of them, and when reference is made to them from time to time, he should take the pains to find them and read, as they will have an important part to play in the comments on

the verse or verses under consideration. Following are the quotations referred to above: "When Cyrus had avenged himself on the river Gyndes by distributing it into three hundred and sixty channels, and the second spring began to shine, he then advanced against Babylon. But the Babylonians having taken the field, awaited his coming; and when he had advanced near the city, the Babylonians gave battle and, being defeated, were shut up in the city. But as they had been long aware of the restless spirit of Cyrus, and saw that he attacked all nations alike, they had laid up provisions for many years; and therefore were under no apprehensions about a siege. On the other hand, Cyrus found himself in difficulty, since much time had elapsed, and his affairs were not at all advanced. Whether therefore some one else made the suggestion to him in his perplexity, or whether he himself devised the plan, he had recourse to the following stratagem. He stationed the bulk of his army near the passage of the river [Euphrates] where it enters Babylon, and again having stationed another division beyond the city, where the river makes its exit, he gave orders to his forces to enter the city as soon as they should see the stream fordable. Having then stationed his forces, and given these directions, he himself marched away with the ineffective part of his army; and having come to the lake, Cyrus did the same with respect to the river and lake as the queen of the Babylonians had done. For having diverted the river by means of a canal, into the lake, which was before a swamp, he made the ancient channel fordable by the sinking of the river. When this took place, the Persians who were appointed to that purpose close to the stream of the river, which had now subsided to about the middle of a man's thigh, entered Babylon by this passage. If, however, the Babylonians had been aware of it beforehand, or had known what Cyrus was about, they would not have suffered the Persians to enter the city, but would have utterly destroyed them; for having shut all the little gates that lead down to the river, they would have caught them as in a net; whereas the Persians came upon them by surprise. It is related by the people who inhabited this city, that by reason of its great extent, when they who were at the extremities were taken, those of the

Babylonians who inhabited the center knew nothing of the capture; (for it happened to be a festival) but they were dancing at the time, and enjoying themselves, till they received certain information of the truth; and thus Babylon was taken for the first time." —HERODOTUS, 1-190.

"When Cyrus got to Babylon he posted his whole army round the city, then rode round the city himself, together with his friends, and with such of his allies as he thought proper. When he had taken a view of the walls he prepared for drawing off the army from before the city; and a certain deserter coming off, told him that they intended to fall on him when he drew off the army. Then Cyrus said: 'Crysantas, let us lay aside these things that are above our force: it is our business, as soon as possible, to dig as broad and as deep a ditch as we can, each part of us measuring out his proportion, that by this means we may want the fewer men to keep watch? So measuring out the ground around the wall, and from the side of the river, leaving a space sufficient for large turrets, he dug round the wall on every side a very great ditch; and they threw up the earth towards themselves. In the first place, he built the turrets on the river, laying their foundation on palm trees, that were no less than a hundred feet in length, for there are those of them that grew even to a greater length than that; the palm trees that are pressed, bent up under the weight as asses do that are used to the pack-saddle. He placed the turrets on these; for this reason, that it might carry the stronger appearance of his preparing to block up the city, and as if he intended that if the river made its way into the ditch it might not carry off the turrets. He raised likewise a great many other turrets on the rampart of earth, that he might have as many places as were proper for his watches. These people were thus employed. But they that were within the walls laughed at this blockade, as being themselves provided with necessities for above twenty years. Cyrus hearing this, divided his army into twelve parts, as if he intended that each part should serve on the watch one month in the year. And when the Babylonians heard this they laughed yet more than before; thinking with themselves that they were to be watched by the Phrigians, Lydians, Arabians, and Cappadocians, men that were better affected to them than they

were to the Persians. The ditches were now finished. And Cyrus, when he heard that they were celebrating a festival in Babylon, in which all the Babylonians drank and reveled the whole night; on that occasion, as soon as it grew dark, took a number of men with him, and opened the ditches into the river. When this was done the water ran off in the night by the ditches, and the passage of the river through the city became passable. When the affair of the river was thus managed, Cyrus gave orders to the Persian commanders of thousands, both foot and horse, to attend him, each with his thousand drawn up two in front, and the rest of the allies to follow in the rear, ranged as they used to be before. They came accordingly. Then he making those that attended his person, both foot and horse, to go down into the dry part of the river, ordered them to try whether the channel of the river was passable. And when they brought him word that it was passable, he then called together the commanders, both foot and horse, and spoke to them in this manner: 'The river, my friends, has yielded us passage into the city; let us boldly enter, and not fear anything within, considering that these people that we are now to march against are the same that we defeated while they had their allies attending them, while they were awake, sober, armed, and in order. But now we march to them at a time that many of them are asleep, many drunk, and all of them in confusion, and when they discover that we are got in, they will then, by means of their consternation, be yet more unfit for service than they are now.' When this was said they marched; and, of course that they met with some they fell on and killed, some fled, and some set up a clamor. They that were with Gobryas joined in the clamor with them, as if they were revelers themselves, and marching on the shortest way that they could, they got round about the place . . . As soon as the noise and clamor began, they that were within perceiving the disturbance, and the king commanding them to examine what the matter was, ran out throwing open the gates. They that were with Gadatas, as soon as they saw the gates loose, broke in, pressing forward on the runways and dealing their blows amongst them, they came up to the king, and found him now in a standing posture, with his sword drawn. They that were with

Gadatas and Gobryas, being many in number, mastered him." XENOPHON, *Cyclopaedia*, Book 7, Chapters 4 and 5. This information may be verified by RAWLINSON, *Five Great Monarchies*, Vol. 3, pages 70, 72.

Verse 9. Since this entire chapter was written against Babylon, both as a kingdom and in regard to its capital, we should interpret the various predictions in that view. Many of the expressions are figurative in form but refer to conditions of desolation and despair that were to result from the attacks by the Persians. The pronoun in the first person in many of the verses means that the Lord used the Persians as instruments in his hands for chastising the Babylonians.

Verse 10. The stars and other heavenly bodies were named with a figurative meaning, referring to the rulers and other men in high places in Babylon who were to be brought down by the invasion of the Persians.

Verse 11. *World* was used of the Babylonian Empire because it was so extensive. God threatened to humble the haughty leaders of that nation.

Verse 12. Man was to be precious in the sense of being scarce in number. That would be on account of the destruction of them by the men under Cyrus.

Verse 13. *Heavens* and *earth* were to be understood in the same sense as *stars* in verse 10, and referred to the prominent persons in the kingdom.

Verse 14. The people who made up the army of Babylon were from various parts of the dominion. Cyrus was to defeat them completely, and as a result those who survive will flee the city and try to escape to their particular districts of residence.

Verse 15. But even those who were living after the fall of the city will not all live to reach their homes. Many of them will be caught by the pursuers and slain.

Verse 16. Some of the survivors will be chased even to their homes where they will be subjected to great indignities. Their families will be disgraced before their eyes; the children being slain and the wives being assaulted.

Verse 17. *Medes* are named here while it is the Persians we have been hearing about all along. The explanation is in the fact that the full title of the kingdom that came against Babylon was Medo-Persia; or, when

worded without the hyphen, it was the Medes and Persians. It was a government formed by the two countries which joined each other; the Medes on the north of the Persians. I shall cite a statement in a text book of ancient history: "Medes and Persians are names of people who sought homes on the plateau of Iran. Those who settled in the south were called Persians. Those in the northwest were called Medes. It seems on account of their common origin their names were closely associated. The people were coming into prominence in course of the days of the Later Babylonian Empire."—Myers, *Ancient History*, pp. 73, 88. The Persians were by far the more important part of the empire, and for that reason were generally named alone; but occasionally a writer named the Medes. But whichever was named, the Medo-Persian Empire was meant. In this verse it is described as a people that would *not regard silver* or gold. That meant they could not be bought off from the siege when the Lord brings them against the Babylonians.

Verse 18. This verse was a prediction of the severity of the forces that will be brought against the city of Babylon.

Verse 19. From this to the end of the chapter the verses should be marked into a bracket. It was a prediction of the complete ruin of the city of Babylon. The history that proves the fulfillment of it is quoted at verse one. The student should carefully read that, then consider the several verses as they are commented upon here. *Chaldees* are named because they were the most outstanding people in the Babylonian Empire. Smith's Bible Dictionary says the following of them: "The Chaldeans were really the learned class; they were priests, magicians or astronomers." Both in history and prophecy, the terms Chaldeans and Babylonians were used to refer to the same empire. Reference to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah was made because the ruin of Babylon was to be as complete and lasting as was that of those cities.

Verse 20. If would be desolate enough if a city ceased to have a single permanent resident. But Babylon was to become so deserted that no Arabian, a people who were only wanderers and usually spent only a short time in any place and that in a tent—not even such a person would ever dare occupy the place.



Verse 21. The creatures named were such as preferred the most lonesome and weird of places. *Doleful creatures* is defined by Strong as "a howler or lonesome wild animal." The houses that once were occupied by the high classes of the Chaldeans shall be full of these weird, lonesome beasts, that will pierce the darkness with their howls. *Owls* is from YAWEN and Strong's definition is, "the ostrich, probably from its answering cry." These other creatures would rend the air with their howls, and then the others would reply with their cry, and thus the lonesomeness of the place would be emphasized by this horrible exchange of the wild beasts. *Satyr* is from SAWER which Strong defines, "shaggy; as noun, a he-goat; by analogy a faun." Smith's Bible Dictionary says: "Satyr, a sylvan deity or demigod of Greek mythology, represented as a monster, part man and part goat. Isa. 13: 21; 34: 14. The Hebrew word signifies 'hairy' or 'rough,' and is frequently applied to 'he-goats.' In the passages cited it probably refers to demons of woods and desert places." *Dance* is from RAQAD and is defined, "to stamp, i.e. to spring about (wildly or for joy)." And so we can get a picture of the situation. These doleful creatures would set up their howling and the wild ostriches would join in with their ansering cries. Such "music" would then cause these hairy goat-like beasts to dance about wildly.

Verse 22. *Wild beasts of the island* must be considered together for they all come from the one word *ry*, which Strong defines, "a howler (used only in the plural), i.e. any solitary wild creature." The first clause of the verse means practically the same as *doleful creatures* in the preceding verse. The meaning of *dragon* is not definite, but refers to some horrible wild beast, and such were to occupy the spots that were once the pleasant palaces of the Chaldeans. The last clause of the verse was a warning that the fate threatened was not far off in the future. Comparatively speaking that would have been true, even though the literal time was over a hundred years. But in the large scope of time covered by the prophecies concerning the world and its national transactions, a hundred years is a short period.

#### ISAIAH 14

Verse 1. The close of the preceding chapter predicted the downfall of

Babylon. It is an interesting coincidence that the fall of that city also marked the end of the 70-year captivity of the Jews, for when Cyrus took over the territory he found these captives there in bondage under the Babylonian Empire. But God put it into his heart to free the captive people; not only to free them but also to assist them in restoring their own institutions in Jerusalem. Accordingly, he gave orders that his own subjects should assist these former captives in whatever way it was needed. The Biblical account of this is recorded in Ezra 1. The secular information on the event is stated in Smith's Bible Dictionary as follows: "Babylon fell before his [Cyrus'] army, and the ancient dominions of Assyria were added to his empire B.C. 538. The prophet Daniel's home for a time was at his court. Dan. 6: 28. The edict of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple, 2 Chr. 36: 22, 23; Ezra 1: 1-4; 3: 7; 4: 3; 5: 13, 17; 6: 3, was in fact the beginning of Judaism; and the great changes by which the nation was transformed into a church are clearly marked."—Article, Cyrus. *Set them in their own land* was fulfilled in Est. 8: 17, when "many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." That means that because of the high standing the Jews then obtained under the support from Cyrus, these people accepted citizenship in the kingdom of Israel.

Verse 2. This verse is merely a detailed account of the fact stated in general terms in the preceding verse. *Shall take them captives* means they would take possession of them for the purpose of making servants of them.

Verse 3. *Rest from thy sorrow* means the relief from the Babylonian captivity. The sorrow did not indicate any special bodily mistreatment, but it was what they felt from being in a heathen land where they were not permitted to serve the true God.

Verse 4. *Proverb* is defined in the margin as a "taunting speech," and the connection agrees with it. The Jews would be able to chide Babylon with her disgrace of being forced to cease her luxurious way of life and oppression of God's people.

Verse 5. Credit for the overthrow of the wicked empire and city was given to the Lord, even though Cyrus was the human agency by which it was done. *Scepter of the rulers* refers to the official signal of royal power that

was to be broken through the Lord's decree. That event happened when the last ruler in Babylon (Belshazzar) was slain as recorded in Daniel 5.

Verse 6. *He* means the Babylonian power and the description of it refers to the harsh treatment that was to be imposed upon those who will fall under its jurisdiction according to the predictions that had been made on the subject. *Persecuted* is derived from a word that means to pursue with intent to inflict a deserved harsh treatment. Certainly the Babylonians deserved very severe punishment for their unjust handling of the unfortunates who fell to them. (see Psa. 137.)

Verse 7. *Whole earth* is accommodative as to extent, and means that when Babylon was put down there was a general feeling of relief. It is a thought similar to that expressed over the conversion of Saul and the easement that came to Christians (Acts 9: 31).

Verse 8. Reference to the trees is figurative, and it is to illustrate the relief that was to be caused by the overthrow of Babylon. A *feller* is one who "cuts down" something. As a ruthless destroyer would cut down the beautiful trees of the forest, so Babylon was pictured as a heartless destroyer of innocent people. But the defeat of that nation was to put a stop to such vandalism.

Verse 9. *Hell* is from *sheol* in the Old Testament and Strong defines it, "hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), including its accessories and inmates." It has also been rendered by grave and pit in the King James version of the Bible. Doubtless the leaders of the wicked nation actually were consigned to the region of Hades, the place of departed wicked souls of men, the place where the rich man went after death. (Luke 16: 22, 23.) But since *sheol* has also a figurative meaning of a state of forgetfulness, it was likewise true that the wicked nation and its men of power were destined to go down never to arise. *Stirreth up the dead* referred to the general rejoicing that would be had by the other nations and kings who had suffered a like experience in downfall. They naturally would rejoice in the calamity of Babylon on the principle that "misery loves company."

Verse 10. This verse is a continuation of the thoughts in the preceding one.

Verse 11. *Grave* is from the same word as *hell* in verse 9, and evidently must take the figurative meaning in the definition since *pomp* is not a material thing. *Noise of viols* is also not something that could be literally transferred to any certain place, hence the word was used here to mean the state of dejection and forgetfulness. As a figurative picture of the lowly state of disgrace to be suffered by Babylon, it was likened to a man's body in the grave, decaying and preyed upon by maggots.

Verse 12. *Lucifer* is from *heylel* and is defined by Strong, "the morning-star," and he says it is from another word that means "brightness" of a showy character. It was used figuratively in this verse to symbolize the dignity and splendor of the Babylonian monarch. His complete overthrow was likened to the falling of the morning star.

Verse 13. These were some of the boasts of the king of Babylon.

Verse 14. The last word is capitalized by the A. V., but the Babylonian monarch knew nothing of Him. The meaning of his boast was that he would be high above others.

Verse 15. *Hell* and *pit* are both used in the same connection, showing they must be understood in a figurative sense. The second word is from an original that Strong defines, "a pit hole (especially one used as a cistern or prison)." The last word of the definition explains why it was used, for certainly the Babylonian king was made a prisoner by the succeeding government.

Verse 16. *Narrowly look* are together in the original and Strong's definition is, "to peep, i.e. glance sharply at." The meaning is they will take one straight look at the fallen hero, then meditate on his changed situation. They will next begin to make remarks about his former greatness and cruelty.

Verse 17. The first part of this verse refers to the Babylonians in overpowering other nations and making devastation of their cities. The last clause refers to the strangle hold the cruel nation maintained of its victims, especially the Lord's people.

Verse 18. The kings of other unfortunate nations are pictured as having gone down in honorable defeat. They were to lie in their graves and leave behind them the respectful memory of the living.

Verse 19. Using the action of interment as the basis for his imagery, the prophet represented the Babylonian king as being denied burial. *Branch* means a descendant, and the king will be treated as if he were an abominable relative whom his ancestors would deny respectful burial. The remainder of the verse is for the same purpose as the forepart, and is a picture of the dishonorable end of the once great king of Babylon. In the words of a poet, he shall "Doubly dying go down, unwept, unhonored and unsung."

Verse 20. *Thy people* would be the unfortunate subjects of the Babylonian king, who had been cruelly treated by this monster of a ruler. They would be given respectful burial but the guilty king would be denied such honor.

Verse 21. The children of such a wicked ruler might imitate him if permitted, therefore they too will be cut off. That prediction is contained in the words *prepare slaughter*, since predictions were sometimes made in the form of an order.

Verses 22, 23. This is a direct prediction of the downfall and perpetual ruin of Babylon. For the historical fulfillment see the quotation at ch. 13: 1.

Verse 24. The mere prediction uttered by the prophet was emphasized by the Lord. It is significant that as the Lord thought or purposed, so he would act when the time came for the carrying out of the prediction of the inspired prophet.

Verse 25. For *Assyrian* see the comments at ch. 7: 18. *Mountains* in symbolic language means government. God was to use certain governments or kingdoms to crush the Babylonians. *Yoke depart off them* means the yoke of bondage that the Babylonians had been imposing upon God's people would be lifted and they would be made free. The reader should turn to Ezra 1: 1-3 for the Biblical account of the noted release.

Verse 26. *Whole earth* was used in this prophecy because the Babylonian Empire was one of the world empires. *All the nations* were the various smaller kings and their governments that had been taken over by the Babylonian king to form his vast dominion of the (then) civilized world. God's purpose included this accumulation of nations and districts into one absolute system of despotic rule.

Verse 27. This verse is similar to

the 24th. It is an emphatic declaration of God to bring his predictions to complete fulfillment.

Verse 28. This prediction was made just prior to the reign of Hezekiah. See 2 Ki. 16: 20 in connection with the present verse.

Verse 29. *Palestina* is from PELESHETH and Strong defines it, "rolling, i.e. migratory; Peleseth, a region of Syria." We know from the context that the prophet had reference to what we call Palestine, although the lexicon's definition does not seem to carry out that idea. The apparent difficulty is clarified by a statement in Smith's Bible Dictionary which I shall quote: "Palestina and Palestine (land of strangers). These two forms occur in the Authorized Version but four times in all, always in poetical passages; the first in Ex. 15: 14 and Isa. 14: 31; the second, Joel 3: 4. In each case the Hebrew word PELESHETH, a word found, besides the above, only in Psa. 60: 8; 83: 4 and 108: 9, has been rendered by our translators for 'Philistia' or 'Philistines.' Palestine in the Authorized Version really means nothing but Philistia. The original Hebrew word PELESHETH to the Hebrews signified merely the long and broad strip of maritime [near the sea] plain inhabited by their encroaching neighbors; nor does it appear that at first it signified more than that to the Greeks. As lying next the sea, and as being also the high road from Egypt to Phoenicia and the rich regions north of it, the Philistine plain became sooner known to the western world than the country further inland, and was called by them Syria Palestina—Philistine Syria. From thence it was gradually extended to the country further inland, till in the Roman and later Greek authors, both heathen and Christian, it became the usual appellation [title] for the whole country of the Jews, both west and east of Jordan. The word is now so commonly employed in our more familiar language to designate the whole country of Israel that, although biblically a misnomer [misleading name], it has been chosen here as the most convenient heading under which to give a general description of THE HOLY LAND, embracing those points which have not been treated under the separate headings of cities or tribes." God was always jealous for his people and was ready to punish any nation that abused them. But he also warned them not to take too much joy from the down-

fall of their enemies. *Serpent* and *cockatrice* were used as symbols of the various nations with whom Israel had to deal. If she became too jubilant over the destruction of one of her enemies, another would arise to punish her.

Verse 30. The leaders of the nation were chiefly to blame for the corruptions, and the severest warnings were directed against them. On the other hand, the helpless common people were to be spared some of the severest punishment. Such favor was expressed in the phrase to *lie down in safety*.

Verse 31. *From the north*. A glance at the map will show that the lands forming the headquarters of the Babylonian Empire lay east of Palestine. It would seem, therefore, that any statement regarding an invasion by Babylon into Palestine should have described it as coming from the east. The explanation of the apparent difficulty in the sacred text is to be drawn from the peculiar nature of the intervening lands, forming a great inconvenience if not an actual barrier against moving any army directly westward from Babylon. I shall quote from an authentic source of ancient history a statement to confirm the foregoing remarks: "Extending for about two hundred miles from north to south, (that is, from near Mt. Amanus to the hills of Galilee) almost in a direct line, and without further break than an occasional screen of low hills, it furnishes the most convenient line of passage between Asia and Africa, alike for the journeys of merchants and for the march of armies. Along this line passed Thothmes and Rameses, Sargon and Sennacherib, Necho and Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander and his warlike successors, Pompey, Anthony, Kaled, Godfrey of Bouillon; along this must pass every great army which, starting from the general seats of power in Western Asia, seeks conquests in Africa, or which, proceeding from Africa, aims at the acquisition of an Asiatic dominion." Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, v. 2, p. 443; Rawlinson's *History of Egypt*, v. 1, p. 21. From the above considerations the student can understand why the citizens of Palestine would see their enemies coming in upon them from the north of them, and the predictions and other remarks in the inspired writings would be made to conform to that fact. I trust the readers will mark this paragraph for future reference when it is cited. *None shall*

*be alone* means the troops of the invading forces will be joined in close ranks and in solid formation for military service, hence will present a front that the victims will not be able to resist.

Verse 32. The *messengers of the nation* were the representatives who would need to treat with the invading forces. They were instructed to state that although they must suffer invasion for the time, yet the Lord had founded Zion and would finally take care of it. Upon this assurance the people of God were to rest their hopes of the future and not allow themselves to become completely dejected.

## ISAIAH 15

Verse 1. For the significance of *burden* see the comments at ch. 13: 1. Also take note of the remarks concerning God's attitude toward the various heathen nations that came in contact with Israel. The Moabites descended from Lot who was a near relative of Abraham, and hence the nation was related to Israel. However, it was always an enemy and the Lord directed the prophet to write some predictions against that people. *Ar* and *Kir* were cities or districts in the land of Moab. *Brought to silence* means to be cut off or brought to ruin. The present tense of the verb is explained in the comments at ch. 1: 1 of this book.

Verse 2. *He* is a pronoun for Moab, and represents the people of that country as weeping over the fallen conditions. The names are of other places in the country that were to feel the hand of misfortune as a punishment for their mistreatment of the people of God. The baldness and cutting of the beard is figurative, and referred to the humiliation that was to be brought upon them.

Verse 3. *Sackcloth* was the same as burlap, a coarse cloth that was used in times of great distress. It may have been literally used at the time of Moab's defeat, or the term could have been used by the prophet as a figurative description of the humility to be felt by the Moabites over their national disgrace.

Verse 4. These names are of other places in the land of Moab that were destined to feel the sting of defeat at the time being predicted by the prophet.

Verse 5. *My heart* referred to the personal feeling the prophet had for the coming misfortunes of Moab. The



citizens were to flee from the invaders, going over to *Zoar*, a town just across the Jordan from Moab. The weeping of these fugitives was compared to the sound of distress that a young mother of the cattle would make over the loss of her offspring.

Verse 6. *Nimrim* was a stream in the land of Moab, but the reference to it was figurative. The desolation to be brought upon the land was likened to the effects of drying up the water sources so that vegetation in general would be withered.

Verse 7. Continuing the figurative description of desolation, the people of Moab were pictured fleeing with the products they had saved to find places of moisture.

Verse 8. This verse is a description of the general cry of distress that the Moabites would make when the threatened invasion takes place.

Verse 9. *Dimon* was another stream in the land of Moab. The bloodshed that was to be suffered by the Moabites was described as if the streams of the land would be made red by the slaughter. The original for *lions* sometimes means a literal lion and at other times it means any kind of violence. In either case the citizens of Moab who escaped the besiegers would be overtaken by some other misfortune.

### ISAIAH 16

Verse 1. The subject of the preceding chapter is carried over into this, which is the prediction concerning the people of Moab. They had been described as fleeing in dismay from the invading forces to be brought against them. But though such forces would be some other heathen nations, they would be acting according to the degree of God. He had his headquarters in Jerusalem which is meant here by *mount of the daughter of Zion*. *Send ye the lamb* meant these fleeing Moabites better seek for help from that divine source, and that should be accompanied with a lamb as a tribute of acknowledgement to Judah for the favor so earnestly to be requested.

Verse 2. This verse describes the panicky flight of the Moabites who will arrive at the places named. It is similar to the prediction made in ch. 15: 5, 7.

Verse 3. The first verse warned the fleeing Moabites to send an offering to pacify the Lord. This called upon them to accompany the sacrifice with a plea for mercy. *Take counsel ad-*

*vised them to act with wisdom and call upon Judah and ask the people to give the outcast Moabites some shelter.* The people of Judah were to spread over them the protecting shadow that would be as complete even at noon (or the height of their distress) as the shades of night would hide one out of sight of his foe.

Verse 4. The present construction of the first clause looks as if Moab was being addressed, yet we know the connection is against such a conclusion. The statement should read, "Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee (Judah). *Covert* means a sheltered place and was used in the same sense as *shadow* in the preceding verse. *Extortioner* is from an original that means "an oppressor," and the last part of the verse is a sort of "wishful thinking" on the part of the Moabites. Isaiah represented them as making these remarks in a form of plea for mercy and shelter. If Judah will grant the favor requested, then when the oppressor has finally been at the end of his ravages, the throne in Zion will stand out as a champion of the rights of afflicted nations.

Verse 5. The foregoing remarks were expressed on the basis of the mercy of the throne of David (Judah) in Zion. Of course we know the Moabites would not be able to form such a conclusion as described here, but the inspired prophet could word it in that way, and record it in his book as a form of prediction against the Moabites.

Verse 6. The prophet continued his denunciations of Moab and this verse is especially severe. *Pride and haughtiness* mean practically the same thing, and such a disposition has always been displeasing to God. The attitude of pride may be manifested in various ways. One exhibition of it was shown by the Moabites in the events recorded in Deut. 23: 4 and Num. 22. It is likewise described in 2 Pe. 2: 15, 16.

Verse 7. *Moab howl for Moab* means the Moabites will howl over their own miseries that will be brought upon the land. *Kirharesheth* was a city of some importance in the land of Moab, and it was destined to suffer in the misfortunes coming.

Verse 8. The places named in this verse were in the land of Moab and were to share in the distress predicted of it.

Verse 9. This verse is a group of literal and figurative terms. The places named were literal, but the prophet

represented the Lord as shedding tears (through the prophet's eyes) enough to water the vines of the country.

Verse 10. Doubtless many of the things predicted here were literally carried out when the country of Moab was attacked.

Verse 11. When *bowels* is used figuratively it means the affections or emotions. The Lord's feelings against Moab was so tense that it was compared to the vibrations of a harp, which was an instrument of many strings.

Verse 12. When Moab sees the unfortunate conditions thrust upon the land, it will be in vain for him to resort to his religious rites.

Verse 13. *Since that time* meant that many predictions had been made against Moab down through the past years.

Verse 14. *As the years of an hireling* means the period of *three years* was a specific term, meaning that within three years the land of Moab was to suffer some defeat. In other words, the prediction of this verse was more "up to date" than the other.

## ISAIAH 17

Verse 1. For the meaning of *burden* see comments at ch. 13: 1. The scene changed and the prophet directed his predictions rather promiscuously. The present verse is a foreshadowing of the misfortunes coming upon Syria. *Damascus* is mentioned because that city was the capital of Syria, a country lying just north of Palestine. The fulfillment of the prediction is recorded in 2 Ki. 16: 9.

Verse 2. There were three places called *Aroer* and it is not certain which one was meant by this verse. But as they were all near the country west of the Jordan, we know it meant that the distress threatened was to come to one of them.

Verse 3. In this one verse the prophet gave warning thrusts against the kingdom of Israel and that of Syria. *Ephraim* meant the former (see comments at ch. 7: 2, 9), and *Damascus* meant Syria since it was the capital city of the country.

Verse 4. This verse is a prediction against the two-tribe kingdom of Judah, signified by naming *Jacob* because he was the founder of the tribes of Israel. The fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in 2 Ki. 24: 14.

Verse 5. When a man reaps his crops he takes the good of the field away. That fact was used to illustrate the event described in the passage cited above. The best of the nation was taken out of the land, leaving the poorest and weakest of citizens.

Verse 6. The likeness of gathering various crops was continued by the prophet. After the general ingathering there is always some grain left in the field, and some grapes left on the vines, and some olives left on the tree. The comparison was made to the "remnant" of which frequent mention has been made (see Comments at ch. 1: 9).

Verse 7. When a man is in trouble he realizes his need of the Lord more than before. This verse is a prediction of the attitude the Jews would have after they had suffered the chastisement of the captivity.

Verse 8. *Not look to the altars* is a prediction of the complete cure from idolatry which the Jews experienced after the captivity. See the quotation of history in connection with ch. 1: 25. *Groves* is explained by the comments at ch. 1: 29.

Verse 9. The unchronological style of the prophecy in the Bible must be borne in mind or the reader will frequently be confused. For instance, the preceding verse predicted the conditions to come after the captivity, while this verse goes back to the time and conditions that caused it. *Strong cities* and *forsaken bough* referred to the desolation in the land to come after the invasion (see ch. 1: 7, 8).

Verses 10, 11. The reason for Israel's grief is stated in this paragraph. God had been forgotten and the real source of strength had been ignored. Though the nation should plant seeds and set out plants that would seem to be unusually thrifty (figuratively speaking), when the time for gathering the crop should come there will be nothing to receive because of the effects of the inroads made by the enemy.

Verses 12-14. God has used heathen nations to punish his own people. However, after getting his service out of them he never permitted them to take pleasure out of the distress of the victims. Especially if they boasted of their success, the Lord brought upon them some evidence of his wrath. This is the subject of these verses which I have grouped into one paragraph.

## ISAIAH 18

Verse 1. This chapter is against the land of Ethiopia. *Shadowing* is from an original word that means to flap or flutter, and *wings* is from one that means the extremity of something. The clause means to make an ado over the wide extent of territory controlled; it referred to the boastful spirit of the country. The last clause of the verse identifies the country meant by the prophet because the Nile flowed through the land of Ethiopia and the word *rivers* is defined as such a stream.

Verse 2. The Ethiopians would traffic with other countries by means of water transportation over the Nile and thence over the Mediterranean. One of their means for this business was of the *vessels of bulrushes*. Some interesting information concerning them may be obtained from secular history which I shall quote as follows: "A sort of light canoe, formed (we are told) of the papyrus plant, and propelled either by a single paddle or by a punting-pole, furnished the ordinary means of transport from one side of the Nile to the other, and was also used by fisherman in their occupation, and by herdsmen, when it was necessary to save cattle from an excessive inundation. The stem and stern of the vessels were considerably above the water; they must have been flat-bottomed and broad, like punts, or they could have possessed no stability. They are probably the 'vessels of bulrushes' spoken of by Isaiah, which were common to the Egyptians with the Ethiopians."—RAWLINSON, *History of Ancient Egypt*, Vol. 1, p. 236. *Saying* is not authorized by the original and it is out of place here. There was no quotation about to be made, but God was telling the prophet what to do regarding the haughty people of Ethiopia. *Go* is defined "cause to carry," and the prophet was told to give a swift (urgent and severe) message to the nation about to be further described. One part of the definition for *scattered* is "to sound," and the word for *peeled* is defined, "obstinate, i.e. independent." The phrase meant to describe the nation as boastful, and it is rightly rendered in the margin by "outspread and polished," and that means the nation was showing off its splendor. *Meted out* is from QAVQAV and Strong defines it, "stalwart." *Trodden down* is from MEBUWCAH and Strong's definition of it is, "a trampling." Thus the five words beginning

with *meted* means the men of Ethiopia were stalwart or strong and fierce, and they trampled under foot other people in their boastful feeling of self-importance. *Rivers* is from NAHAR and the full definition of Strong is, "a stream (including the sea; especially the Nile, Euphrates, etc.); figuratively prosperity." *Spoiled* is from BAZA which Strong defines, "a primitive root; probably to cleave." The meaning of the clause is that the land through which the Nile flowed had become boastful of its supposed greatness, and had been cruel in its treatment of other countries with which it came into contact.

Verse 3. The attention of people of the world was called to the decree being announced by the prophet. They were charged to hear when *he* (God) gave the signal (*ensign*) of his dealing with the nation described in the preceding verse.

Verse 4. *Take my rest* means the Lord would take up his watch in his dwelling place. God's ability to see all that is going on was described as being as clear and sure as his operations of the things of nature.

Verse 5. The imagery in this verse is drawn from the conditions of various crops. Before the production could have time to mature the vines and branches would be clipped and allowed to fall to the ground.

Verse 6. These fallen products will do the owner no good. They will be left for the wild beasts and fowls to consume. The meaning is that God would cut short the work of the Ethiopians and expose it to the nations around them.

Verse 7. *That time* meant the time when the land of Ethiopia will have been chastised according to the predictions made in this chapter. *Present* be brought referred to the customary tribute that was paid in ancient times by one nation to another, or by one person to another. It was either an expression of respect, or in the nature of a concession of defeat, to pacify the demands of some victorious contestant. For more comments on this subject see those at Gen. 32: 13 and 1 Sam. 10: 27, in the 1st and 2nd volumes of this Commentary. This *present* will be brought by the people described in this and the 2nd verse. Bringing it to the *place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion*, meant it would be a tribute of submission to the national headquarters

of God's people which was located at the mentioned spot in Jerusalem.

### ISAIAH 19

Verse 1. See comments at ch. 13: 1 for the meaning of *burden*. In prophetic literature we may expect to find much figurative language. The Lord was represented as riding on a swift cloud, which meant he would make a swift and overpowering invasion into Egypt. When anything is done by the direction and decree of the Lord, it is the same as if he did it personally. God often used one nation to punish another, and the present verse, with most of the chapter, is a prediction of the punishment of the Egyptians by the hand of the Assyrians. *Idols be moved* means the plight of Egypt would not be relieved by the gods upon which the country had professed to depend.

Verse 2. It is not uncommon in a case of great military disturbance, for the closest of friends and relatives to be thrown into confusion and become enemies to each other. Jesus made such a prediction against Jerusalem to be fulfilled when the city would be surrounded by the Roman army (Matt. 24: 10; Mark 13: 12).

Verse 3. The people of Egypt will be thrown into a general panic and a spirit of fear and distrust will prevail. In their desperation they will seek for help from their idol gods, but they will not receive any benefit from that source. The first verse shows that the idols themselves were to be alarmed at the presence of the invading army. And neither will such characters as "fortunetellers" be able to give them any information that would be of the least amount of consolation.

Verse 4. It was predicted that a *cruel lord* would rule over the Egyptians. That was fulfilled when the dynasty of Greek sovereigns was placed over the land. Those rulers were known as Ptolemies, and I shall give a citation from ancient history to confirm the prediction: "With the cities of Phoenicia and the fleets of the Mediterranean subject to his control, Alexander [The Great] easily effected the reduction of Egypt. . . . Altogether the Ptolemies reigned in Egypt almost exactly three centuries. The rulers who held the throne for the last two hundred years or more, with few exceptions, were a succession of monsters, such as even Rome in her worst days could scarcely

equal." MYERS, *Ancient History*, pages 276, 292.

Verses 5, 6. This prediction was evidently figurative, for history does not record any time when such conditions ever became true literally as described. But the depression that was to come upon the land was aptly compared to the misfortunes named.

Verse 7. *Paper reeds* is from ARAH and the lexicon defines it, "a naked (i.e. level) plot." It means the meadows near the brooks would be dried up and the grass withered.

Verse 8. The creatures in the streams would be diminished so that the fishermen would be disappointed when they tried to carry on their occupation.

Verse 9. A dearth of vegetation would cut off the supply of flax. That would interfere with the weaving trade and thus confuse or confound the weavers.

Verse 10. This is similar to verse 8 in its meaning. *Sluices* is from a word that means "wages," and *fish* in the original may signify any kind of living creatures. The verse means that fishermen or any others who expect to make wages by dealing in such commodities would have their purposes hindered.

Verse 11. *Zoan* was once the headquarters of royalty in Egypt which accounts for the mention of the *princes of Zoan*. I shall quote from Smith's Bible Dictionary on this subject: "This city [Zoan] is mentioned in connection with the plagues in such a manner as to leave no doubt that it is the city spoken of in the narrative in Exodus as that where Pharaoh dwelt, Psalms 78: 42, 43, and where Moses wrought his wonders, on the field of Zion, a rich plain extending thirty miles toward the east. Tanis gave its name to the twenty-first and twenty-third dynasties, and hence its mention in Isaiah 19: 11, 13." The prophet chided the princes of this city who had been disposed to boast to Pharaoh of their ancestry as being wise.

Verse 12. What had become of these wise men? If they possessed as much knowledge as they claimed, they should have been able to tell their king something in explanation of what the Lord had threatened against the land.

Verse 13. This is much the same as v. 11, with the added thought that the princes of the city had been deceived.



As a result of their own deception they had also misled Egypt. This is on the principle set forth by Jesus when he said: "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15: 14).

Verse 14. *Mingled a perverse spirit* denotes that God had confused the princes since they were already disposed in the direction of error. After having their minds warped it would be expected that they would mislead others. This is somewhat like the prediction that was made concerning the followers of Rome (2 Thess. 2: 11). To *err* means to step aside from a straight path, which is likened to the acts of a drunk man.

Verse 15. *Head or tail*, etc., means the extremes as to classes, and the prediction was that all would be affected by the conditions brought into the country.

Verse 16. Because women are naturally more timid and more easily disturbed, the fact was used by the prophet to illustrate the condition of fear to be created in Egypt. The hand of the Lord was to be manifested by the presence of the forces from the territories used by the Lord as his agents in the case.

Verse 17. The Egyptians will be brought to know that God was the one who decreed the misfortunes of their country, which was for the purpose of punishing it for its corruptions. And it was also known that He was the one who ruled over the land of Judah, hence the terror that would be caused by the very mention of that country. A further reason for this feeling will be seen in some verses following.

Verse 18. After the rule of the Ptolemies (described at v. 4) had been established over Egypt, one of their kings took many of the Jews down to that country (see JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book 12, Chapter 1, Section 1).

Doubtless it was largely through the presence of these Jews that the people of Egypt became aware of the importance of the God of Judah. As a result of these influences, the feeling of the Egyptians finally changed to that of respect for the newcomers from the foreign land, and this respect even awakened in them a desire to know more of their sacred literature. *Speak the language of Canaan* was a prediction along the line of the remarks above. In connection with this subject, I believe it will be profitable to

copy from Smith's Bible Dictionary the account of a famous Greek version of the Old Testament that was made in Egypt in course of the Ptolemaic dynasty. The title of that work is a part of the quotation which follows which I trust the student will mark for convenient future reference.

"SEPTUAGINT (*the seventy*). The Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament appears at the present day in four principal editions . . . The Jews of Alexandria had probably still less knowledge of Hebrew than their brethren in Palestine; their familiar language was Alexandrian Greek. They had settled in Alexandria in large numbers soon after the time of Alexander, and under the early Ptolemies. They would naturally follow the same practices as the Jews in Palestine; and hence would arise in time an entire Greek version. But the numbers and names of the translators, and the times at which different portions were translated, are all uncertain. The commonly-received story respecting its origin is contained in an extant [existing] letter ascribed to Aristeeas, who was an officer at the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus. This letter, which is addressed by Aristeeas to his brother Philocrates, gives a glowing account of the origin of the Septuagint; of the embassy and presents sent by King Ptolemy to the high priest at Jerusalem, by the advice of Demetrius Phalereus, his librarian, 50 talents of gold and 70 talents of silver, etc.; the Jewish slaves whom he set free, paying their ransom himself; the letter of the king; the answer of the high priest; the choosing of six interpreters from each of the twelve tribes, and their names; the copy of the law, in letters of gold; the feast prepared for the seventy-two, which continued for seven days; the questions proposed to each of the interpreters in turn, with the answers of each; their lodging by the seashore, and the accomplishment of their work in seventy-two days, by conference and comparison. This is the story which probably gave to the version the title of the Septuagint, and which has been repeated in various forms by the Christian writers. But it is now generally admitted that the letter is spurious, and is probably the fabrication of an Alexandrian Jew shortly before the Christian era. Still there can be no doubt that there was a basis of fact for the fiction; on three points of the story there is no material dif-

ference of opinion, and they are confirmed by the study of the version itself:—1. The version was made at Alexandria. 2. It was begun in the time of the earlier Ptolemies, about 280 B.C. 3. The law (i.e. the Pentateuch) alone was translated at first. The Septuagint version was highly esteemed by the Hellenistic Jews [Greek-speaking Jews] before the coming of Christ. Wherever, by the conquests of Alexander [The Great] or by colonization, the Greek language prevailed, wherever Jews were settled, and the attention of the neighboring Gentiles was drawn to their wondrous history and law, there was found the Septuagint, which thus became, by divine Providence, the means of spreading widely the knowledge of the one true God, and his promise of a Saviour to come, throughout the nations. To the wide dispersion of this version we may ascribe in great measure that general persuasion which prevailed over the whole East of the near approach of the Redeemer, and led the Magi [the wise men] to recognize the star which proclaimed the birth of the King of the Jews. Not less wide was the influence of the Septuagint in the spread of the gospel. For a long period the Septuagint was the Old Testament of the far larger part of the Christian Church. *Character of the Septuagint.*—The Septuagint is faithful in substance, but not minutely accurate in details. It has been clearly shown by Hody, Frankel and others that the several books were translated by different persons, without any comprehensive revision to harmonize the several parts. Names and words are rendered differently in different books; those of the Pentateuch are the best. The poetical parts are, generally speaking, inferior to the historical, the original abounding with rarer words and expressions. In the major prophets (probably translated nearly 100 years after the Pentateuch) some of the most important prophecies are sadly obscured. Ezekiel and the minor prophets (generally speaking) seem to be rendered better. Supposing the numerous glosses and duplicate renderings, which have evidently crept from the margin into the text, to be removed, and forming a rough estimate of what the Septuagint was in its earliest state, we may perhaps say of it that it is the image of the original seen through a glass not adjusted to the proper focus; the larger features are shown, but the sharpness of def-

inition is lost. The close connection between the Old and New Testament makes the study of the Septuagint most valuable, and indeed indispensable, to the theological student. It was manifestly the chief storehouse from which the apostles drew their proofs and precepts" (pp. 604, 605).

Verse 19. The Lord never sanctioned the building of an altar away from Jerusalem, but this was merely a prediction that something of the kind would be done. An account of it may be read in JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book 13, Chapter 3, Section 1.

Verse 20. Despite the fact that this altar was built only by the authority of man, the inspired prophet made a prediction concerning it. To predict a thing does not necessarily mean either to approve or condemn it. There is no mention in this verse of any animal sacrifices being offered on this altar. It became a public signal of the respect that came to be had for God, and resulted in some favorable treatment for the Jews by the Egyptians. That is what was meant by *he shall send them a saviour*.

Verse 21. *Do sacrifice and oblation* does not mean that God authorized animal sacrifices to be offered by the Egyptians. Men sometimes express themselves in gratitude for favors received, or in tribute to the greatness of the God of the earth. And even all this could be done without literally offering animal sacrifices.

Verse 22. This verse is partly a repetition of the predictions made earlier in the chapter as to the changing attitude of the Egyptians toward God and his people. After the country had felt the chastising hand of the Lord, it improved its conduct and in turn enjoyed some of the fortunes that were predicted by the inspired prophet.

Verse 23. This verse predicts a time when the national lines would be somewhat broken up, and there would be more or less a fusion of the races. It will be well to cite some secular history in confirmation of this prediction as follows: "Upon the partition of the empire of Alexander [The Great], Ptolemy had received Egypt, with parts of Arabia and Libya. To these he added by conquest Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, Cyrene, and Cyprus. Following the usage of the times, he transported a hundred thousand Jews from Jerusalem to Alexandria, attached them to his person and policies by wise and concilia-

tory measures and thus effected, in such measure as was possible, at this great capital of the Nile, that *fusion of the races* [emphasis by E.M.Z.] of the East and West which was the dream of Alexander." MYERS, *Ancient history*, p. 291. Information on this point may be found also in JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* Book 12, ch. 1, Sec. 1.

Verse 24. The three countries named were to form a kind of three-power pact as described in verse 23.

Verse 25. When a nation does what is pleasing to God, he makes a sort of claim over it. This is the meaning of the words *Egypt my people*, and the other possessive terms in the verse. There is nothing new in this passage as to God's connection with temporal governments. (see Dan. 4: 17; Rom. 13: 1-6; 1 Tim. 2: 1, 2.)

### ISAIAH 20

Verse 1. This verse sets the date of one of the predictions of Isaiah. I do not mean the exact year or month, but the period in general. We may read about this Tartan in 2 Kl. 18: 17, and can learn there that he moved in the days when the Assyrian Empire was strong and was acting against other nations.

Verse 2. The prediction of the prophet was preceded by some manual performances. On the subject of prophets "acting" see the comments at 1 Kl. 14: 21 in the 2nd volume of this Commentary. The performance was to remove the covering from around his waist and the shoes from his feet. Strong defines the original for *naked* by, "nude, either partially or totally." Since men wore other articles besides this sackcloth about the loins, the definition would apply the restricted meaning in this place.

Verse 3. Isaiah was required to go thus partially nude and with his feet bare for three years. *Sign* means some visible thing that would attract attention, and *wonder* means practically the same thing. It was one of God's methods of impressing mankind with the importance of the message about to be delivered. It would seem to us to be a severe experience required of a righteous prophet in God's behalf, but there were other cases far more disagreeable than this that were imposed upon the prophets of the Lord. But the special reason for this acting on the part of Isaiah will be seen in the prediction about to be made.

Verse 4. Let the reader take careful note of the terms of this prediction, especially those about the exposure of the body. Then read also the following quotation from secular history which shows the fulfillment of the prediction: "Sennacherib now pressed on against Egypt . . . The condition of Egypt at this time was peculiar. . . The second great battle between the Assyrians and Egyptians took place near the place called Altaku, which is no doubt the Eltekeh of the Jews, a small town in the vicinity of Elkron. Again the might of Africa yielded to that of Asia. The Egyptians and Ethiopians were defeated with great slaughter. Many chariots, with their drivers, both Egyptian and Ethiopian, fell into the hands of the conqueror, who also took alive several 'sons' of the principal Egyptian monarch . . . The princes and chiefs who had been concerned in the revolt he took alive and slew, exposing their bodies on stakes round the whole circuit of the city walls. Great numbers of inferior persons, who were regarded as guilty of rebellion, were sold as slaves." RAWLINSON, *Ancient Monarchies*, v. 2, pp. 159, 160.

Verse 5. *They* means any who had expected great things of Egypt and Ethiopia. They will be ashamed of them when they see the events predicted in verse 4.

Verse 6. *Isle* is from a Hebrew word that means "a habitable spot." It is used indefinitely of the various places where people had been looking to Egypt and Ethiopia as a place of refuge from the Assyrians. But when they see these very countries subdued themselves by the Assyrians, they will ask each other, *how shall we escape?*

### ISAIAH 21

Verse 1. See the comments at ch. 13: 1 for the meaning of *burden*. *Desert* is from an original with a wide range of meaning, having been rendered in the A.V. by such words as "speech," and is defined in the lexicon by "driving." *Sea* is from YAM, and the first definition of Strong is, "from an unused root meaning to roar." The thought of the first sentence in this verse is that the prophet heard a driving roar, referring to the severe message he was about to receive to be delivered against a certain nation. The remainder of the verse is for further description of the message.

Verse 2. The prophet here came

more directly to the subject with his description of this message by calling it a *grievous vision*. He wrote in this and several following verses as if he personally was affected by the heavy news about to be delivered. Some country (to be named later in this chapter) had been guilty of unrighteous dealings with the unfortunate people. They had been *dealing treacherously* and spoiling or defrauding the citizens and God was determined to punish the nation. And, as was so often done before, the punishment was to be inflicted by the hand of another nation, and it is named in this verse. *Elam* was another name for Persia, and *Media* was the same as the Medes. *Go up* is a prophetic style of making a prediction, and in the present case it was a prediction that the Medes and Persians would be the nation used to chastise the nation complained of.

Verse 3. The prophet continued his complaints, as if the severity of the message was still affecting him personally. Doubtless a good man would sincerely be concerned with the interests of others, but in this case the victim was very wicked, hence the passage was meant to depict the feelings said wicked nation should have.

Verse 4. This is more along the same line as the above. *Heart* means the mind and *panted* means to reel or stagger. Let the reader still observe the comments in the preceding verse as to why the prophet took this worrying unto himself.

Verse 5. *Prepare the table* is a predicting of some banqueting that the prophet saw as he was looking through the "telescope," and a notice of that feast is in Dan. 5: 1.

Verse 6. Isaiah explained why he was reporting the things named above. It was because the Lord had told him to *set a watchman*. Although the grammatical form of the sentence puts his watchman in the third person, it really meant Isaiah, because he it was who saw this table or banquet with his prophetic eyes.

Verse 7. This banquet was destined to be broken up soon, for the watchman saw some military forces approaching. This was indicated by the horsemen and chariot.

Verse 8. *Lion* is from *ARIX* which Strong defines, "in the sense of violence, a lion." The forces that the watchman saw approaching grew in their intensity until it was compared

to a lion, that beast being a very fierce and violent creature.

Verse 9. Again the watchman saw chariots drawn by horses and with their drivers with them. Such an array suggested a military attack. The prophetic story was made short by stating the result of this military attack in the words *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*. Thus the overthrow of Babylon has been the theme of most of the chapter, and it was to be accomplished by the hand of the Medo-Persian Empire as specified in verse 2. Mention of the destruction of the images was to show that false gods cannot deliver a kingdom from punishment if the true God decrees its defeat.

Verse 10. The rendering in this verse is somewhat indefinite. *Threshing* is from *MEDUSHSHAH* and Strong defines it, "down-trodden people." *Corn* is from *BEN* which the same author defines, "a son (as a builder of the family name), in the evident sense of literal and figurative relationship, including grandson, subject, nation, quality or condition, etc.)" The meaning of the verse is an address of the prophet to his brethren the Jewish people. He was remembering their many misfortunes that had been predicted, and was describing them as such. He wished them to take note that the foregoing predictions had been delivered to him from the Lord.

Verse 11. For the meaning of *burden* see the comments on ch. 13: 1. The *watchman*, of course, was Isaiah, and *Dumah* is a region in Arabia. That land was occupied by enemies of the Jews. *Night* is from a Hebrew word and Strong gives its figurative meaning as "adversity." The people of Arabia were represented as inquiring about their future as to fortune or misfortune.

Verse 12. The *morning* means the opposite of night, and the people of Arabia were warned that adversity and relief from it would alternate with them in their experiences. *Enquire ye, return*, meant for them to look out for further happenings to their country.

Verse 13. This is a continuation of the predictions against Arabia. The people were represented as in flight from the sword and must take refuge in the forest.

Verse 14. *Tema* was another heathen people, and they were called upon to refresh the refugees with water as they were shut in at the forest.



Verse 15. One heathen nation was often set against another to carry out the decrees of God in punishment for its great wickedness.

Verse 16. *Years of an hireling* means in exactly one year the thing predicted would happen. *Kedar* represented another group of people in Arabia descended from Ishmael, and they had usually been against God's true people.

Verse 17. *Archers* were men who used the bow and arrow in battle. It was predicted that the war forces of these descendants of Ishmael would be reduced. The prediction was from God and was sure to be fulfilled.

## ISAIAH 22

Verse 1. For the significance of *burden* see the comments at ch. 13: 1. *Valley of vision* is a figurative reference to the area around Jerusalem. This chapter is a series of predictions concerning the people of that region, who we understand were the Jews. *Gone up to the housetops* referred to the habits of pleasure in which the Jews were indulging, not realizing the fate awaiting them. It will be useful information about the activities that took place on the roofs of the houses to quote from Smith's Bible Dictionary: "In no point do Oriental domestic habits differ more from European than in the use of the roof. Its flat surface is made useful for various household purposes, as drying corn, hanging up linen, and preparing figs and raisins. The roofs are used as places of recreation in the evening, and often as sleeping-places at night"—Article, House.

Verse 2. The first half of this verse refers to the same facts as were indicated in connection with the housetops in the previous verse. *Not slain with the sword* refers to the fact that the country was taken with very little bloodshed.

Verse 3. The people, especially the leading citizens, were taken alive and carried away. (2 Ki. 24: 14.) *Bound by the archers* means they were taken captive by the military might of the enemy nation invading the land.

Verse 4. The prophet "took it to heart" again when he saw the unpleasant events that were to come upon his people, as he did in the preceding chapter.

Verse 5. Much of the language of this verse is figurative, but the thought is directly on the subject of the captivity that concerned the Jewish nation.

Verse 6. *Elam* as a geographical territory was usually considered about the same as Persia. However, while it was the Babylonians (politically) that subdued Israel, the people of Elam or Persia made up a great part of that government. *Quiver, chariots* and *shield* are all military terms. The first refers to the bow and arrow and the second to the vehicles of war. The third is a protective covering, but the men of *Kir* (a place in the territory of Assyria) were going to strip this shield from the victims in the attack, leaving them helpless at the mercy of the foe.

Verse 7. This is a continuation of the prediction that the land of Israel was to be invaded by the war forces from a distant country.

Verse 8. *Discovered the covering* means the same as *uncovered the shield* in v. 6. *House of the forest* refers to the capitol building in Jerusalem (1 Ki. 7: 2; 10: 17), and it was destined to be destroyed at the time of the captivity. (2 Ki. 25: 9.)

Verse 9. The prophet could see the reduced condition that was coming upon the city of Jerusalem. The walls would be attacked until there would be breaks in them. Supplies of water would be threatened so that they would be confined to the lower pools.

Verse 10. In the desperation over the damaged walls, they would number or take an inventory of their houses, to see how many of them could be spared for material in repairing the walls and thus strengthen their defence.

Verse 11. As further means of conserving the water supply they would make a tank between the two walls of the city. All of these conditions should cause them to reflect on the case and turn their minds to the Maker of all things. Yet it was predicted that they would not think of Him.

Verse 12 *In that day* means the day of their subjection to the besieging army. God will call upon them to weep over their undone state, indicating their feeling of dejection by wearing sackcloth as was the custom at such times.

Verse 13. Instead of the fruits of penitence that the Lord called for (indicated in the preceding verse), the people will be thoughtless of their shortcomings, and will be passing the time with activities of pleasure. They will be engaged in banqueting and

high living. They will be acting on the principle that eating and drinking is to be indulged in, when they should be concerned about the awful fate just ahead.

Verse 14. *This iniquity* means the sin of idolatry, which was the national evil for which they were doomed to go into captivity. That experience was decreed for them as the only cure for their idolatry. For the long historical proof that the captivity did cure them of that national disease, see the comments at ch. 1: 25. *Till ye die* referred to their national death (see v. 18) which took place when the nation lost its standing as a government, and was buried (figuratively) in the land of Babylon.

Verse 15 *Shebna* was a man of great importance in Jerusalem, and held at different times some office regarding the finances of the city, as well as part of the work connected with the secretary.

Verse 16. *Shebna* was found preparing a burying place as if he expected that he and his people would live and die in their home land. I believe this was a figurative picture of the state of mind which the nation as a whole had, even in the face of the many divine predictions that the nation was to fall. The figure drawn from the supposed activities of *Shebna* was in view of the national grave outside of the native ground of the kingdom of Judah. Babylon was to be the national grave, even as it was to be the caldron as per *Ezk.* 11: 11.

Verse 17. This verse is so literally true to the facts of history that we know the figurative language of the verses connected also means the captivity. The *mighty captivity* is recorded in 2 Ki. 24 and 25. *Will surely cover thee* is the only figurative part of this verse. It was used because a burial requires a covering over.

Verse 18. The nation of the Jews was to be *tossed like a ball* which indicated a rough and not too respectful treatment. The *large country* was Babylon into which the kingdom of Judah was to be cast. *There thou shalt die* referred to the national death that was discussed at verse 14. The *chariots of thy glory* referred to the former greatness of the nation that had been abused and devoted to the worship of idol gods. By such misuse of their opportunities the glory was turned into shame upon the *lord's house*

namely, the house of the true God in Jerusalem.

Verse 19. *Thy station* meant the position of honor which the nation enjoyed in Palestine while it was in control of that great country. *He shall pull thee down* meant the king of Babylon would take the kingdom of Judah out of its realm and cast it down into captivity.

Verse 20. *That day* is a phrase found often in the prophetic writings, and it is not always used with the same definiteness as to dates. Another thing, the Biblical writers are not always strictly chronological in the order of their events. In the present verse the date is over a hundred years before the date of fulfillment of the predictions in the preceding verses. *Eliakim* lived in the days of Hezekiah as may be learned in 2 Ki. 18, so the expression *that day* referred to the time in general when the affairs of the nation were declining rapidly toward the fall predicted earlier.

Verse 21. *Him* means *Eliakim* and *thy* means the nation as a whole, but whose priests and rulers had become so corrupt that they were not worthy of having charge of the institutions of God. *Eliakim* was not to have formal jurisdiction, but was to be a strong moral factor among the people.

Verse 22. *Key* was used figuratively and applied to the work of *Eliakim* in opening an opportunity for the *house of David* (people of Judah) to reform their manners. *Be a father* was a term of endearment to indicate the hearty interest he would have in his people who had deprived themselves of the favor of the Lord through their iniquities.

Verse 23. *Nail* is from YATHED which Strong defines, "from an unused root meaning to pin through or fast; a peg." Its use is to indicate a secure place to hold possessions of value. *Throne* has a figurative or complimentary meaning since we know that *Eliakim* was never made king in a literal sense.

Verse 24. Continuing the figure drawn from a nail or peg, the former good qualities of the people were to be hung upon this secure place. The *vessels* was a figurative reference to the divine services that had been so grievously corrupted.

Verse 25. *That day* was again used with a general application, yet focusing the "telescope" upon a definite

period in that *day*. Even the good work of Eliakim, as well as that of Hezekiah and Josiah and other good men, would not be able to prevent the great calamity of the captivity. So the *nail* was destined to be removed and the things that had been hanging on it were to fall as per the predictions in vs. 14-19. The prophet did the writing of the predictions, but they were bound to come true because *the Lord hath spoken it*, and he is able to carry out all of his plans.

### ISAIAH 23

Verse 1. For the meaning of *burden* see the comments on ch. 13: 1. *Ships of Tarshish* referred to the commercial traffic on the water, to be discussed at verse 3. This was to be brought to an end as a chastisement for the wickedness of the city. *Land of Chittim* means the island of Cyprus according to Strong's lexicon. The prediction meant the shipmasters would first learn about the destruction of their business as they touched at this island on a return trip from abroad.

Verse 2. *Of the isle* had reference to the position of the city of Tyre. I shall quote some information from Smith's Bible Dictionary on this subject: "TYRE (a rock), a celebrated commercial city of Phoenicia, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Its Hebrew name, *Tzor*, signifies a rock; which well agrees with the site of *Sur*, the modern town, on a rocky peninsula, formerly an island. There is no doubt that, previous to the siege of the city by Alexander the Great, Tyre was situated on an island; but, according to the tradition of the inhabitants, there was a city on the mainland before there was a city on the island; and the tradition receives some color from the name of Palaetyrus, or Old Tyre, which was borne in Greek times by a city on the continent, thirty stadia to the south." Further information will be cited from a secular work, bearing on the subject at hand: "The Tyrians also offered submission, but refused to allow Alexander to enter the city and sacrifice in the temple of Hercules. Alexander was determined to make an example of the first sign of opposition that did not proceed from Persian officials, and at once began the siege. It lasted seven months, and, though the king, with enormous toll, drove a mole from the mainland to the island, he made little progress till the Persians were mad enough to dismiss the fleet and give him com-

mand of the sea through his Cyprian and Phoenician allies. The town was at length forced in July, 332; 8,000 Tyrians were slain, 30,000 inhabitants sold as slaves, and only a few notables . . . were spared. Tyre thus lost its political existence, and the foundation of Alexandria, presently changed the lines of trade, and gave a blow perhaps still more fatal to the Phoenician cities" BRITANNICA, v. 18, p. 809. This is also confirmed in MYERS, Ancient History, p. 275; JOSEPHUS, Antiquities, Book 11, Chapter 8, Section 3, ROLLIN, v. 3, pp. 187-204.

Verse 3. This verse describes the traffic that brought Tyre so much revenue, of which she boasted so loudly but which was to be cut off. *Great waters* means the Mediterranean Sea, and *Sihor* was another name of the Nile. *Mart* means a market. The Nile River enabled Egypt to produce great crops of grain and other food-stuff. The merchants of Tyre, on the other side of the Sea, would send their ships over the *great waters* and trade their manufactured wares to Egypt for her agricultural products. They then took them back to the home city where they were offered for sale to the world. In this way Tyre was a mart or market of nations. But all of this business was to stop at the fulfillment of the predictions of Isaiah.

Verse 4. Zidon was not directly concerned in the foregoing predictions, but was destined to suffer as a result of the commercial ruin of her sister city Tyre. The latter half of the verse will have some light thrown upon it by some statements in Smith's Bible Dictionary in the article *ZIDON*: "All that is known respecting the city is very scanty, amounting to scarcely more than that one of its sources of gain was trade in slaves, in which the inhabitants did not shrink from selling inhabitants of Palestine." It is little wonder, then, that Isaiah made such a prediction as this.

Verse 5. The predictions concerning Egypt and Tyre will all cause a distressed feeling when the report of their fulfillment is heard.

Verse 6. Tarshish and Tyre were related through their trade dealings. The former was situated in the south of Spain. It was natural, therefore, for the misfortunes of Tyre to affect the other city. The apparent command for the inhabitants of the *isle* (Tyre) to howl, was a prophetic form of prediction that they would howl.

Verse 7. Tyre was reminded of the great antiquity of her commercial sister city. At the same time she was notified that the city would remain away from her (Tyre).

Verse 8. The prophet asked about the source of the predictions against Tyre. Was it some unauthorized or uninspired human being? If that were the case she need not be concerned over the warning even though it seemed to be serious.

Verse 9. The question of the preceding verse was answered in this. It was the Lord of hosts who had his own purpose in view. That was in order to stain or cast down the pride of the city, which would be accomplished by causing her leading men to be held in contempt by the people of the world.

Verse 10. *Daughter of Tarshish* is a figurative reference to the citizens of the city. Those citizens were bid to make a tour of inspection through the place, as complete as a river would make that flowed through it. Upon such a tour they would find the city to have *no more strength*.

Verse 11. *He* means the Lord, for it was he who had stretched out his hand over the (Mediterranean) Sea. That fact was to shake the kingdoms that had been depending on the merchandising with Tyre for their means of financial support.

Verse 12. In the study of verse 4 we learned that Zidon was connected with Tyre by common interests of some kind. And at verse 1 it was seen that *Chittim* was the same as Cyprus, and that the mentioned cities were interested in that isle. Zidon was notified in the prophetic style of language that her days of rejoicing and prosperity would be ended. It would not do her any good to look toward the island of Cyprus expecting to find rest from her distress.

Verse 13. This verse is an interruption of the story of Tyre to call attention to some facts about the Chaldeans. The prophet cited the undesirable experiences of that people as an example of the Lord's power to predict the affairs of nations, and also of His ability to bring about such changes as he saw fit. After this brief diversion the prophet resumed his predictions against Tyre.

Verse 14. This is identical with the first part of verse 1, which see.

Verse 15. This prediction did not mean that Tyre was to be entirely

destroyed during the 70 years, but only that its glory should be partially eclipsed. This experience was not expected entirely to cure Tyre of her corruptions, but later a more drastic treatment will be given her according to the decree of God.

Verse 16. The prophet represented the situation as if some musician marched around Tyre in a sort of mocking serenade. The musician ironically bid Tyre to resume her own expressions of merriment in an effort to regain her past prestige.

Verse 17. The period of 70 years ended but found Tyre not fully reformed. She *turned to her hire* which means she went back to her old evil practices for gain.

Verse 18. But this time the Lord will take more drastic control of the affairs of the city. Her revenues will not be allowed to be laid up for her own use. Instead, they will be *holiness to the Lord*, which is a Biblical way of saying they were to be used for the benefit of the Lord's servants.

## ISAIAH 24

Verse 1. After a few chapters against other nations, the prophet again turned his attention to the kingdom of Judah. This chapter will be concerned with the great captivity that occupies so much of this book. *Earth* is from *ERETS* which Strong defines, "from an unused root probably meaning to be firm; the earth (at large, or partitively [partly] a land)." The last portion of the definition applies to our verse. The part of the earth that was occupied by Judah was so much more important than any other part that the prophet called it *the earth*. Making it empty had direct reference to the captivity in which the land of Judah would be emptied of its inhabitants.

Verse 2. The outstanding thought in this verse is that no partiality was to be shown in the capture and enslavement of the population. The account in 2 Ki. 24 and 25 verifies this prediction.

Verse 3. The prediction in this verse is the same as that in verse one. But I call attention to the significant remark of the prophet as to why the thing predicted was going to take place, that it was because the Lord had spoken the word. He not only has the knowledge of the future, but when he makes a prediction he is able to



see that it will be fulfilled just as it was predicted to happen.

Verse 4. *The earth* is used in the same sense as it was in verse one. Because of the desolated condition brought on by the captivity, there shall be mourning and regrets.

Verse 5. The cause of the captivity was in the mind of the prophet when he wrote this verse. The ordinance was the law concerning the year of rest for the land that was required by the Lord. That ordinance is recorded in Lev. 25. Let the reader carefully examine that chapter. The outstanding iniquity of the Jewish nation was idolatry, yet in this verse it seems the reason for the captivity was the neglect of the sabbatical year for the land. There is no conflict between the two subjects. When man ceases to give the true God his entire devotion, but becomes interested in other gods, he will likewise lose his respect for God's laws. Consequently, when Israel became interested in false gods he also became concerned in his own selfish interests. This was why he so greedily abused the soil by defrauding it of its deserved rest every seventh year. Such an unlawful practice had been continued until the land had been wronged out of 70 years of rest. The captivity was brought upon the nation in order to give the soil its much deserved rest.

Verse 6. *Few men left* was fulfilled as recorded in 2 Ki. 24: 14. When the king of Babylon made his principal draft upon the citizens of the country it says, "none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land."

Verse 7. This verse predicted the stoppage of agricultural activities of the land. *Wine mourneth* is an accommodative form of speech, meaning the people would mourn because their industry of the vineyards would be made to cease.

Verse 8. Not only would the productive industries be brought to an end, but their recreations also would stop; they would not be in any frame of mind to engage in them.

Verse 9. The downhearted frame of mind would be such that wine would taste bitter.

Verse 10. A state of general disorder was predicted to come by reason of the besieging forces.

Verse 11. *Crying* is from TSEVACHAH and Strong's definition is, "a screech (of anguish)." The wine will be so

bitter (v. 9) that when men drink it they will screech because of the abominable taste it will leave in the mouth.

Verse 12. This is the same prediction as that in verse ten.

Verse 13. This verse predicted the same facts as those of verse six. *Few men left* in that verse corresponds to *gleaning grapes* in this.

Verse 14. *They* does not mean any persons in particular. The prediction pointed to a general recognition of the greatness of the Lord.

Verse 15. This verse is practically like the preceding one in that it predicts a general tribute of praise. However, some of the terms have been so indefinitely translated that much confusion might result. I shall examine the two key words in the passage. *Fires* is from UWR and Strong defines it, "flame, hence (in the plural) the East (as being the region of light)." *Sea* is from YAM and the part of Strong's definition that applies here is, "locally, the West." So the verse really is a prediction that God's greatness will be recognized from the East to the West.

Verse 16. The first sentence of this verse is the same in thought as the preceding two verses. But after making these predictions, the prophet came back to the awful conditions of his people that had been the subject of his writing most of the time. *Lean-ness* means the reduced state his people were to have thrust upon them because of the invasion by the enemy. Such an event was to be brought upon the nation because of its own evils, prominent of which was the *treacherous dealing* of men in positions of advantage which they abused for their own gain and enjoyment.

Verse 17. *Fear, pit and snare* means the same and refers to the situation that was to come upon the nation when the Babylonians came against the city. *The earth* is explained in the comments at verse 1 of this chapter.

Verse 18. This verse refers to the same event as the several preceding ones. The various phrases were used to show that when the time of the invasion arrived there would be no escape for any class.

Verse 19. See the comments at verse 1 for the significance of *the earth*, that it meant that part of the country occupied by Judah. The prophet was still on the main subject, the Babylonian captivity, which was begun by

the siege of Jerusalem, at which time the powers therein were overthrown.

Verse 20. A stunning blow on the body of a man will cause him to stagger and sway as if he were drunk. It was used to compare the effect upon Jerusalem of the blow that would be dealt the city by the Babylonians. *Cottage* is also defined "hammock" in the lexicon in which the meaning as of a swinging couch is seen. Such a back-and-forth movement is like the reeling and staggering of the kingdom of Judah at the attack given it by the besiegers from the country of Babylon.

Verse 21. This verse gives the reason for the events described above. The Lord was going to punish the nation for its iniquities, especially those of the *high ones* or those in the lead among the citizens who were chiefly responsible.

Verse 22. *They* means the leaders especially, but it was to include the people also since they "loved to have it so" (Jer. 5: 31), and hence were partakers in the evils. *Shut up in prison* referred to the land of Babylon which became the national prison for Judah for 70 years. The Biblical account of this captivity is in 2 Ki. 24 and 25, and the secular history that confirms it was quoted at ch. 3: 1. A remarkable feature of this verse is the abrupt change of subject without any apparent break in the story. Immediately after the word *prison* the subject is the return from the captivity. The *many days* means the 70-year period of the captivity after which the Jews were to be permitted to return to their own land. The Biblical account of that bright period is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The secular confirmation of it as cited at ch. 14: 1. *Visited* is from a Hebrew word with a various meaning. It is defined in Strong's lexicon, "a primitive root; to visit (with friendly or hostile intent); by analogy to oversee, muster, charge, care for, miss, deposit, etc." The connection would require the part of the definition that says "with friendly intent," since that was what took place at the end of the 70-year captivity.

Verse 23. *Then* is an adverb of time and refers to the return from captivity which was the subject in the close of the preceding verse. This conclusion is supported by the word *when* which also is connected immediately with the resuming of divine rule in mount

*Zion* and in *Jerusalem*. These two names are frequently mentioned in connection with each other because the first was that particular spot in Jerusalem that was the headquarters of the nation. The reference to the moon and sun is figurative and illustrates, by contrast, the brightness of the reign of the Lord after his people will have come back from the captivity and resumed their proper place in Jerusalem.

## ISAIAH 25

Verse 1. The prophet was impressed with the greatness of God and was moved to praise his holy name. The direct basis for such an expression was the picture of the events just seen in the "telescope" (see illustration at ch. 1) concerning the captivity and the following return of the Jews to Jerusalem.

Verse 2. *Hast made* is to be understood as a form of inspired prediction. The events described in this verse were about two centuries in the future. For the details of the destruction of Babylon, see the comments and quotations at ch. 13: 1.

Verse 3. *Strong people and terrible nation* means the heathen who had held the Lord's people under subjection but were finally induced to release them. In so doing they were led to recognize the glory that was due Him.

Verse 4. During all the terrible years of the captivity, the Lord sustained the righteous ones among his people. See the long note on this point in Vol. 2, page 174 of this Commentary.

Verse 5. The figures in this verse were to illustrate God's mastery of the forces that had oppressed his people. It would be disagreeably hot because of the scorching sun and the dryness of the earth. Then a cloud would be brought over the spot and its shadow would relieve the condition of the heat. Likewise, the heat of the oppression during the captivity was to be relieved by the divine shade from the cloud of God's presence in leading his people out of their bondage, even as the cloud guided them from their bondage in the land of Egypt (Ex. 14: 19, 20).

Verse 6. This and the following verses should be marked into a bracket and entitled, "Introduction of the Gospel." Then consider the verses in their order as they will be commented upon. The "telescope" was extended

into the future so the prophet could see the glorious reign of the Lord in the time of Christ. *This mountain* means mount Zion as of ch. 24: 23, the place where the Gospel was to be first proclaimed. The *feast* referred in general to the rich provisions that would be made for the servants of God under the Christian Dispensation. Many of the terms used were figurative and were used to illustrate the purity and richness of the divine blessings. *Wines ON the lees*. The last word means dregs or the settlings that come from wine after it has been pressed from the grape. As long as this refuse matter is mixed through the juice it will not be pure. When the wine is *ON the lees* or dregs—the dregs have settled to the bottom—the wine will then be pure and rich. This fact was used by the prophet to illustrate the purity of the Gospel. *Fat and marrow* are both from an original word that Strong defines by “richness.”

Verse 7. *This mountain* is the same that is named in the preceding verse. *Face of the covering* has the order of the words reversed and it should read *covering of the face*. *All people* means the same as *the earth* in ch. 24: 1; that is, it means the people who occupied that territory, namely, the Jews. The *covering* had special reference to the same thing as the *vail* in the last clause. 2 Cor. 3: 13-16 will shed much light on this subject and let us understand that the *vail* means the unbelief in Christ that the Jews had and still have. But both Isaiah and Paul have prophesied that the Jews will someday cast off that vail of unbelief and will acknowledge the salvation that is offered through Christ. (See Rom. 11: 26.)

Verse 8. The unbelief of the Jews is a special subject and is applied to their rejection of Christ as the divine Son of God. However, there is a general state of sin and unbelief in the world. The resurrection of all the dead and the immortality of the righteous beyond was predicted and typified in the Old Testament. That great truth could not be published as a demonstrated fact, however, until Christ actually performed it in Jerusalem, “*this mountain*,” by coming forth to die no more, and bringing a multitude of others from the grave in like manner. This is the force of Matt. 27: 53; Acts 13: 34; 26: 23; Rom. 6: 9; 8: 29; 1 Cor. 15: 20; Eph. 4: 8; Jude 14. With the establishing of the faith in the resurrection, the servants of

the Lord will be able to face death with a feeling of victory.

Verse 9. This verse predicted the state of mind and expressions of joy that would be fulfilled at the end of the captivity. The Jews would be so glad for their regained freedom that they would give the credit for it to the Lord.

Verse 10. Moab was only one of the many nations who had opposed God's people, but it was a prominent one and was singled out as an example of the vengeance of God upon his enemies. *Straw is trodden down* refers to the use that was made of manure in ancient times. I shall quote from Smith's Bible Dictionary on this subject: “*DUNG*. The uses of dung were two-fold—as manure and as fuel. The manure consisted either of straw steeped in liquid manure, Isa. 25: 10, or the sweepings, Isa. 5: 25, of the streets and roads, which were carefully removed from about the houses, and collected in heaps outside the walls of the towns at fixed spots—hence the dung-gate at Jerusalem—and thence removed in due course to the fields.” This was to illustrate the lowly use which the Lord would make of those who disrespected Him.

Verse 11. The action of a swimmer was described to illustrate the success of the Lord in his movements among his enemies. The very resistance of the water furnishes the swimmer with the means of navigation. Likewise, the opposition of the heathen was to be used by the Lord as an item in his power over the foe. This use of the enemy nation would overthrow his *pride* which was an outstanding characteristic of Moab (ch. 16: 6). As the Moabites enriched themselves by *the spoils of their hands*, so God would use his hands to *swim* among them and recover those ill-gotten gains.

Verse 12. A fortress is a place of defence against war, hence to *bring down* was a signal that the defence was overthrown. Thus the Lord was going to bring defeat to this proud nation who had misused God's people, but it was to be so complete that it was described as being brought down to *the dust*. The walls of protection relied upon by the heathen would be demolished before the mighty power of the army of Heaven, and their materials would lie prostrate in a mass of dust on the ground.

## ISAIAH 26

Verse 1. *That day* meant the time of the return from the captivity. The people of God would have much cause for rejoicing over such a great deliverance. *Walls and bulwarks* mean literally the provisions for defence against a foe, and the Lord gave assurance that he would take care of his own.

Verse 2. *Open ye the gates* is a prophetic style of speech, and was a prediction that the gates of the city would be open to admit the Lord's people.

Verse 3. It was appropriate to write as the prophet did in these verses after the nation had been predicted to overcome the captivity. For the mind to *stay* on the Lord means for it to be settled or fixed there and not waver from time to time. Such will be the case if one has abiding trust in the Lord.

Verse 4. This verse continues the thought of trust in the Lord. *Jehovah* is from YEHOWAH which Strong defines "the self-Existent or Eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God." Because they believed Him to be sure they accepted him as their ruler.

Verse 5. The *lofty city* was Babylon that had just been overthrown. (See the comments and long note at ch. 13: 1.)

Verse 6. The *poor and needy* had been the victims of the haughty Babylonians, but now they were to be free from the oppressor and were to have their day of triumph. Not that they would actually have any rule over the Babylonians, for that city was down never to rise again. But it was in effect as good as if they did bear rule over it.

Verse 7. The heathen city and her people had won and held their sway over others by force. The progress of the just class was to be supported by an upright life. *Thou most upright* refers to the Lord who will *weigh* ("prepare"—Strong) the path of the just. This is a beautiful thought and means that if a man indicates a desire to walk in a just path, God will provide such a path for him. (Ch. 35: 8; Prov. 4: 18.)

Verse 8. The Lord's judgments are always right, therefore it is well for man to *wait* or rely upon His instructions that he may never go astray.

Verse 9. The prophet Isaiah was a righteous man and personally had the

sentiments he describes in this verse. However, he had in mind also the attitude that he believed the people of the nation should have. They had been redeemed from a terrible captivity through the might and goodness of the Lord, and hence should be glad to honor him.

Verse 10. *Let favor be shewed* means though it is shewed, yet the wicked will not appreciate it or improve his conduct. Even though he is surrounded by the goodness of the upright, he will continue his unjust life and disrespect for God.

Verse 11. *They* refers to the wicked of the preceding verse. *Will not see* and *shall see* might seem to be a contradiction. The prophet meant that the wicked would not intend to see, but the Lord was asked to make them see the uplifted hand of divine power. *Fire of thine enemies* means the fire prepared for the enemies of God should be applied to these wicked people. (See Matt. 25: 41.) This punishment will make them be ashamed for the envy they had felt for God's people.

Verse 12. There is logic in the conclusion of the prophet. Since God had brought about all of the works connected with the people, he would certainly be able and willing to give them such peace as only could come from the divine source.

Verse 13. *Other lords* had reference to the rulers in Babylon where the people of Judah had been in captivity for 70 years. But those lords had been dethroned and the servants of the Lord were again free to glory in the divine name.

Verse 14. *They are dead* refers to the "other lords" who had held dominion over the Lord's people. They were literally all dead, but their kingdom also was dead and destined never to live again as a world power.

Verse 15. *The nation* was that of the Jews that was increased. This did not apply literally to their number when they returned from captivity. It really had been decreased until only a "remnant" came back. But it was increased in honor before the eyes of the world. It was also destined to be increased in number as the years passed by. That is what is meant by the reference to *the ends of the earth*.

Verses 16-18. These verses have been put into one paragraph because it is impractical to comment on them



separately. The anguish and sorrow that the people of God suffered while in the captivity is likened to the distress and preliminary pains of a woman expecting to go through childbirth. But the situation was even worse than a normal case of labor and birth. All of the pain and desire for completion of the process was there but was not successful, as sometimes is the case when a woman is brought to bed for the expected purpose. She may go through all the agonizing throes of the period and then not be able to bring forth a child. That is what is meant by the words *brought forth wind*. Likewise the Jews in captivity went through all the sorrows and mental pain here described, and yet were not able to bring about any relief. On the subject of these terrible experiences see the comments at Psa. 137.

Verse 19. The preceding paragraph dealt with the conditions in the time of the captivity. This verse predicted the release of the nation from that bondage and likened it to a resurrection from the dead. The death is the same as was predicted in ch. 22: 14, 17, 18. All of the leading words in this verse are figures to illustrate the glorious recovery of the Jewish nation from its political death and burial in the country of Babylon which was referred to as its grave.

Verse 20. This verse was addressed to the Lord's people while they were yet in the land of captivity. It means for them to take courage and patiently wait a little while longer. *The indignation* is defined in the lexicon as God's fury against sin. The Jews were in captivity on account of their sins against God. As soon as that had served the purpose of divine punishment they were to be given their freedom.

Verse 21. *Punish the inhabitants*, etc., applied both to the Jews and the Babylonians. The former were to be sent into Babylon for their sins caused by their idolatry. The latter were to be chastised because of their attitude toward the Jews, even though they were carrying out the decrees of God. *Disclose her blood* means that all iniquity, whether committed by the Jews or the Babylonians, was to be exposed and punished.

### ISAIAH 27

Verse 1. The subject still is God's wrath against the Babylonians because of their mistreatment of his people.

These people were to be retained in captivity for a while to punish them for their disobedience of the divine laws, but the kingdom that was the instrument in God's hands for that purpose was finally to "pay up" for its hardness of heart against their victims. In a literal sense a leviathan and serpent and dragon are vicious creatures of the sea or land. They were used in this place to compare the wicked and violent character of the Babylonian Empire.

Verse 2. *That day* meant the day when the Jews would be guarded by the Lord even as a husbandman would watch over his vineyard.

Verse 3. Even though the people of God were to be in captivity, He will keep his eye upon them to see that no permanent damage be done them.

Verse 4. One word in the definition for the original of *fury* is "poison." We should attempt to get the meaning of the first clause by the process of elimination. We know from numerous passages that God does have fury against evil. But it will not act as a "poison" within him; that is, it will not be any harmful condition to Him. But he will be a destructive force against his enemies and will be too strong for the enemies of his vineyard to succeed in their attempts to damage it. Even an entanglement of briars and thorns would be unable to hinder the Lord in his battle with the enemy; he would *go through them* as easily as if they were not there.

Verse 5. *Strength* is from an original that is defined, "a fortified place; figuratively a defence." The verse means that if the enemy should *take hold* or attack the fortification of God with the expectation of forcing him to come to terms of peace, he will be disappointed because of the superior might of his would-be victim. Instead, he will be compelled to come to the terms of peace that God will dictate.

Verse 6. *He* means God who is the owner of the vineyard which was composed of the Jewish people. *Take root* is a figurative term and was used as a prediction of the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon.

Verse 7. This verse is worded in a very unusual manner, and the pronouns will need to be carefully assigned in order to avoid confusion. The facts referred to pertained to God's punishment of Israel for his sins. For that purpose Babylon was used by the Lord as the instrument

to smite or punish Israel. But God in turn was going to punish Babylon by smiting him for slaughtering His people. And the punishment that God was going to inflict upon Babylon was going to be more severe than that which he put upon his own people Israel. I shall reword the verse with explanatory words inserted as follows: "Hath he (God) smitten him (Israel) as he (God) smote those (Babylon) that smote him (Israel)? Or is he (Israel) slain according to the slaughter of them (Babylon) that are slain by him (God)?" Of course the answer to the question was "no." This same idea is set forth in Jer. 30: 11.

Verse 8. This verse means the same as the preceding one as it pertains to Isaiah. *Debate* is from *ruwe* which Strong defines, "a primitive root; properly to toss, i.e. grapple; mostly figuratively to wrangle, i.e., hold a controversy." God was going to have a *measure* of controversy with his people over their departure from the true worship. But he was not going to let it be as rough (a wind) as it might usually be when coming from the East. Such was the meaning of *stayeth his rough wind*, etc.

Verse 9. This refers to the fact that Israel was cured of idolatry by the captivity. The terms used in this verse are related to altars that are used to burn sacrifices to the idols. Those altars were generally made of stones, so those stones were to be turned into chalkstones to render them useless for sustaining fire. And those altars were frequently erected in groves, so accordingly the groves with their images were to be destroyed; *not stand up*. For the historical confirmation of this prediction see the quotation and comments in connection at ch. 1: 25.

Verse 10. While the Jews were in Babylon undergoing their cure for idolatry, their own country was lying in the condition described in this verse. *Defenced city* means Jerusalem that was caused to be *desolate* by the ravages of the Babylonians. It is the same thought expressed by ch. 1: 7, 8. The land was not to be cultivated but would be thrown open for the live stock to browse in at will.

Verse 11. *Boughs* is from an original with a general meaning. Being *withered* referred to the state of vegetation when no intelligent care would be given to the trees or shrubs or vines. There would naturally be

dead branches still projecting from the plants since no caretaker was attending to the pruning at the proper time. The only use that will be made of these branches will be to build fires of them by the women living in the land. *He that made them* means the Lord, who will suffer his people to fall into this terrible state of desolation because they persisted in acting as a *people of no understanding*. On this last phrase see the comments at ch. 1: 3.

Verse 12. The "telescope" was lengthened so that the prophet could see into the time when Israel was to be gathered again to their own country. *Beat off* meant to thresh or gather the crops or other materials of usefulness. *River* means the Euphrates, and *stream of Egypt* is the same as "river of Egypt," which was a part of the southern boundary of Palestine. The Babylonian Empire had all of the territory between these two bodies of water under control. This verse was a prediction that God would gather up all of his people wherever they might be scattered throughout that vast territory. The Jewish people as a whole were confined within the immediate scope of Babylonia, but some were scattered in various places, and God proposed to gather them again in their original city of Jerusalem.

Verse 13. It was customary to sound a trumpet when an important event was about to take place (Lev. 25: 9), and that fact was used figuratively by the prophet to announce the release of Israel from captivity so they could return to their own land. *Assyria* is the same as Babylonia and it is explained at ch. 7: 18. For the historical confirmation of the predicted return from the captivity, see ch. 14: 1 and the quotation.

## ISAIAH 28

Verse 1. When *Ephraim* is named other than as a single tribe it means the 10-tribe kingdom or the kingdom of Israel as distinguished from the kingdom of Judah. Smith's Bible Dictionary says this on the subject: "After the revolt of Jeroboam the history of Ephraim is the history of the kingdom of Israel, since not only did the tribe become a kingdom, but the kingdom embraced little besides the tribe." When Isaiah began his book the kingdom of Israel was still in existence in Palestine, with its capital at Samaria, but it was soon to be taken into captivity by the As-

syrians. Some of the prophet's predictions were against this kingdom of Israel. As in the case of Judah so in that of Israel, the severest complaints were against the leaders of the nation whom the prophet called *drunkards*. That word is from *SHIKKOR* which Strong defines, "intoxicated, as a state or habit," and he says it is also from another word which he defines, "a primitive root; to become tipsy; in a qualified sense to satiate [gorge] with a stimulating drink or (figuratively) influence." The whole clause means the leaders were filled or gorged with their indulgence in pleasure. Not only had they been doing these unrighteous things but were proud and haughty over it. The prophet warned them that their pride would become like a fading flower.

Verse 2. *Mighty and strong one* referred to the Assyrian Empire that the Lord soon would bring against the kingdom. The event was figuratively described by such terms as *destroying storm*, a *flood*, an *overflowing* and a *casting down*. The Biblical account of the fulfillment of this prediction is in 2 Ki. 17. The secular confirmation was quoted in connection with the comments at ch. 3: 1.

Verse 3. This verse takes the same comments as verse one.

Verse 4. The *fat valley* referred to the extravagant life of the leaders which they had been following for so long. *Hasty fruit* is defined by Strong, "the first-fruits of the crop." The comparison was merely to the greediness with which a person would devour the first piece of fruit that would appear after the winter season. The coming "strong one" (v. 2) would eagerly take possession of these people of God's nation.

Verse 5. The "telescope" was lengthened again until the prophet could see into the general future. His vision was to include the Jews as a whole, but especially the leaders in Jerusalem who had the charge of national worship. A few verses will concern the corruptions of that people down to the time of the captivity which was designated by *that day*. These remarks apply to this and the following verses through verse eight. *Crown of glory* means that the people will see the power and glory of the Lord in evidence when he brings his judgments to bear upon the unrighteous leaders.

Verse 6. God will always give guidance to the leaders of his people if

they will accept it. In battle with the enemy at the gate, if the soldier will rely on the divine support he will not be disappointed in the outcome.

Verse 7. The priests and the prophets were outstanding among the leaders of the nation. They were frequently charged with living in ease and luxury (ch. 5: 11, 12; Lev. 10: 9; Amos 6: 6), and this kind of life made them unfitted for the divine service.

Verse 8. These statements would be true literally as the results of drinking and banqueting would prove. And they would likewise illustrate the moral corruption and filthiness of those who were guilty of such practices.

Verse 9. All of the verses from this through 22 should be marked into one bracket with the general subject of "the time of Christ." However, there were so many phases of that great period and so many different characters entering into it, that each verse will need to be considered as it comes, at the same time referring again in some cases to the context as it affects certain verses especially. The present verse pointed to that particular feature of the Gospel instruction that considered the principle of growth. In Heb. 5: 13, 14 it is shown that babes in Christ must grow and finally become able to partake of the strong food. That is what this verse means by being *weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts*.

Verse 10. The thought of the preceding verse is carried on in this by comparing it to the literal method of composing a document. No writing was ever produced all at one stroke or even a single line. The writer always wrote it a line at a time, but found it necessary to follow each line with another. Likewise, the Lord always gave his revelation of truth to man a little at a time. The writer (or speaker) was always directed to give it to the people in such amounts and measure of thought as they could understand and receive. By receiving it I mean the ability to make a use of it in life, and Jesus taught that idea just before he left the disciples, in John 16: 12.

Verse 11. *Stammering* is from *LADAH* which Strong defines, "a foreigner." The verse is a prediction of the use of spiritual gifts in the beginning of the Gospel period and refers to the act of speaking with foreign tongues. We are sure this is the meaning of

the verse because Paul cites it in direct connection with that in 1 Cor. 14: 21.

Verse 12. *Rest and refresh* are given practically the same definition in the lexicon which means a settling down or state of satisfaction. The application is to the consoling effect the word of Christ would have had on the people if they would have received it as intended. But this verse predicts that it would not be accepted, and especially would it be rejected by the Jews to whom it was first offered.

Verse 13. The first part of this verse has the same meaning as verse 10. The last clause might be a little confusing and leave the impression that God gave these lines in order that the people might fall. The meaning will be clear from Paul's wording of the same passage in 1 Cor. 14: 21. After quoting the words about giving the revelation by the use of other tongues he says: "and yet for all that will they not hear." This shows Isaiah meant that even though the people were given these lines of instruction, they would stumble and fall and be snared by their own disobedience.

Verse 14. The rulers of God's people were of the same class that misled them in ancient times, but the prophecy was directed against the ones living in the time of Christ. *Scornful men* were men who would make light or belittle what they did not like. The Jewish leaders in the time of Christ did not like his teaching because he rebuked them for their wicked lives. He warned them that though they rejected his teaching, they would finally feel the force of them through the judgments that God would bring.

Verse 15. The Jews scorned the warnings of Christ and determined to prevent their fulfillment by a most desperate and wicked plot, that of the murder of the one who was giving them these unpleasant warnings. They were so foolish as to think that by killing an inspired prophet his warnings would also be destroyed. We must not think these people themselves called their plans or claims by such terms as *lies* or *falsehoods*. Those are the names by which the prophet Isaiah designated them, but those Jews were so foolish as to think they could accomplish them. I trust the reader will keep these distinctions clearly in mind as he follows my comments on this verse. *Covenant with death* refers to the covenant that was made with Judas. The purpose of this

was that they could cause Jesus to be put to death. By getting Jesus out of the way by death they thought the *scourge*, as they considered his teaching, would be rendered harmless for them. But all of these claims and expectations of theirs were considered as *lies* and *falsehood* by the prophet who was able to see the outcome of the whole case.

Verse 16. The Jews did not realize that in carrying out their wicked designs against Christ they were fulfilling the great prediction that was ever made concerning the welfare of humanity. I call it the greatest because all others rested upon its fulfillment. The death and resurrection of Christ alone could have made any of the other predictions of any value. But regardless of this weighty truth, Judas and the Jews working with him must be charged with the murder of Jesus because of their motives in the transaction. But their wicked purposes in the tragedy did not prevent God from directing it into the fundamental result of laying the foundation for the salvation of the world. *Zion* refers materially to Jerusalem which was the scene of the resurrection of Christ, and spiritually it refers to the Church, because it is in that institution that Christ became the basis for the hope of salvation (Heb. 12: 22, 23; 1 Cor. 3: 11; Eph. 5: 23). A *tried stone* means he was to be put to the test in his life and death. He met the test and withstood it (Heb. 2: 18; 4: 15; 1 Pe. 1: 3). *Not make haste*. The last word is from *chuwsh*, which Strong defines, "to be eager with excitement." Those who believe in Christ will be able to feel calm in the assurance that belongs only to the true servants of God.

Verse 17. It was stated in the preceding paragraph that the Jews unintentionally fulfilled an important prediction of God when they caused Christ to be put to death. That is as far as their part went, however, for they had nothing to do with his resurrection. Had they been able to prevent that, or had the resurrection never taken place, their expectations would have been realized to some extent. But the triumphant ascension of Christ from the grave to die no more defeated their wicked designs. It also opened the way for God to proceed with his purposes which include the humiliating defeat and chastisement of the Jews. *Hail and waters* are used figuratively, referring to the



storm of God's judgment against the wicked schemes of those who had plotted the death of his Son. The *lies* means the same as was explained in verse 15.

Verse 18. The *covenant with death and hell* was also explained in verse 15. *Overflowing scourge* means the resurrection of Christ, because that fact overthrew and destroyed all the wicked intentions of the murderers.

Verse 19. The general thought in this verse is the bitter disappointment of the Jews when it was reported that Jesus was alive. The very news of the event filled them with dismay, and they began at once to seek some way of counteracting the effect of the report. Let the reader see the account in Matt. 28: 11-15.

Verse 20. This highly figurative passage means to show the insufficiency of the basis on which the Jews rested their hopes of success. If a person were to prepare a bed and its covering in accordance with ordinary or small requirements, it might be satisfactory at the time. But if the needs should be increased, such as a person's growing in stature and the temperature becoming cooler, then the bed would not be large enough and the covering would not be sufficient. Likewise, as long as the Jews were doing the part that was as supposed to be done, the Lord did not interfere with their operations and the *bed* and *covering* seemed to be sufficient. But when the test of the resurrection came, their expectations were proved to be short of success—the *bed* was too short and the *covering* was too scanty. That was why the Jews had the sensations described in the preceding verse.

Verse 21. The Lord's victory over his foes is likened to that which he had through David (2 Sam. 5: 20) and through Joshua (Josh. 10). Not the same kind of a contest, but as complete in the success over the enemy. The two instances of *strange* are from different originals but they have virtually the same meaning. The central thought is that of something different and wonderful. Bringing Christ from the dead to die no more was something that had never been done before.

Verse 22. The prophet closed this noted prophecy with an admonition to the Jews who were predicted to be defeated in their plot against Christ. *Lest your bands be made strong* being uttered just after the admonition in

the beginning of the verse indicated a possible offer of mercy upon the proper proof of penitence. Indeed, the exhortation of Peter to the guilty ones (Acts 2: 36-40), and their following obedience to the command, confirms this conclusion. *Consumption* means consummation or completion. God had revealed to Isaiah that he would complete his decrees as they affected the conduct and the fate of the whole world.

Verse 23. The leading thought from this verse to the close of the chapter could aptly be stated by the word "appropriateness." Some of the prophecies against the Jewish nation were severer than others; also, some were to be fulfilled at one time and others later. Likewise, no chastisement was intended to destroy the people but only to render them more serviceable. The prophet was ready to write an illustration covering the above line of thought and here called for earnest attention. Let the reader keep the foregoing comments in mind as he follows through the succeeding verses.

Verse 24. No plowman spends all the time getting the ground ready for sowing; if he did he would not get to sow. Likewise, God will not always be making predictions and never take the time to bring about their fulfillment.

Verse 25. The illustration continued, showing that after the ground has been prepared, the farmer would put in the seed. *Fitches* and *cummin* are small plants and the seeds were used mostly for flavoring. They were not so important, perhaps, yet were very desirable. Then the heavier crops were planted such as wheat and barley. *Rie* was a variety of wheat, and *place* means "border." This grain seems to have been placed around the body of the field where it would not take space from the main crop.

Verse 26. *Discretion* is the key word in this verse, and it was the rule by which the farmer managed his crops. If God thought enough of his human creature to give him this discretion, he certainly would use it in his own works of prophecy and fulfillment.

Verse 27. "Severe cases require severe treatment" is a saying that is true and illustrates the point in this verse, and also agrees with the comments on "appropriateness" at verse 23. *Fitches* and *cummin* were small plants with light fruit and would not require heavy instruments or rough

treatment to separate the grain from the chaff. *Threshing instrument* comes from one word that means a heavy sledge. *Cart wheel* refers to the vehicle as a whole which was a large one with much weight. The statement means that it would not be appropriate to use such instruments to prepare such light crops at the time of preparing them for use. Instead, they were treated with a *staff or rod*, both of which means a stick that a man would use by hand.

Verse 28. The idea of consent or appropriate progress was further illustrated. Grain that was intended for bread could not always be under the process of threshing, but it should be *bruised* or ground into flour. Were the farmer to continue the threshing even after the separation from the chaff had been effected, it would *break* or "destroy" it so it would not be fit for food, or at least much of it would be lost through unnecessary pulverization. On that principle God would not chastise his people so heavily that they would not be of any use to Him afterwards.

Verse 29. The chapter concludes with a significant declaration that the prophecy came from the Lord, which would guarantee its fulfillment.

## ISAIAH 29

Verse 1. The "telescope" was again shortened to be focused upon the Jewish nation at the time just before the captivity. *Ariel* is defined by Strong, "a symbolical name for Jerusalem," and Smith's Bible Dictionary defines it, "a designation given by Isaiah to the city of Jerusalem." Also the wording in the text bears out this definition in that it says, "the city where David dwelt." The last clause means as though it said, "though ye add and kill sacrifices from year to year."

Verse 2. *Yet* is directly connected with the close of the preceding verse. The clause means that in spite of the sacrifices that were killed in Jerusalem, God was determined to *distress Ariel*. It shall be unto me as *Ariel* means that it (the sacrifices) will be rejected as well as the city. It was true that in all of their sojourn in Babylon the Jews were not permitted to offer any sacrifices to God (ch. 1: 10-15; 5: 11, 12; 43: 22-24; Zech. 7: 5, 6). For the Biblical account of the fulfillment of this prophecy as a whole see 2 Ki. 24 and 25. For the extended comments on it see ch. 1: 10.

Verse 3. God was going to bring a foreign army (the Babylonians) against Jerusalem and lay siege to it. A *mount* is a military post and *forts* means an embankment. These things were to enforce the siege to keep the citizens from escaping.

Verse 4. The language of this verse is mostly figurative. It describes the prostrated and humiliated condition the people would be in when they found themselves so helplessly shut in with no apparent prospects of relief.

Verse 5. A humane parent will feel compassion for his child even while administering a severe punishment. Likewise God shows his love for his people in spite of the severe chastisement he was to bring upon them. In the midst of the prediction that a foreign nation was to be brought against the Jews, the prophet saw the overthrow also of that foreign power. This verse and the following through verse 8 predicts how it will be with the enemies who were to be used by the Lord to punish his people. They were to be reduced and scattered as dust and chaff.

Verse 6. *Thou* means the people of God, and they were to be *visited* with a great deliverance. *Thunder* and the other like terms in this verse means the power by which God would overthrow the enemies of his people.

Verse 7. *Munitions* means the city of Jerusalem in the sense of a fort. The great nations that will bear down so heavily against this city will be so completely defeated that when it is all over the memory of it will "seem like a dream."

Verse 8. The closing thought of the preceding verse is continued through this. All of the experiences stated as taking place while a man is sleeping are merely described to show the completeness of the victory of God's people over the foe. That when it is all over and all traces of the opposition are wiped out (the Babylonian Empire went down never to rise again), the thought of their terrible trials of the past will then seem as unreal as are the things described in connection with this dream. We should not attach any further significance to this curiously interesting verse.

Verse 9. *They* has special reference to the leaders of the nation who were held chiefly responsible for the corruptions. *Stay* and *wonder* has the sense of saying, "pause and you will be amazed when you are told of the

condition you are in." Then follows the description of that condition, that *they* were drunken and were staggering. But it was not a material state; it was one pertaining to their spiritual conduct.

Verse 10. Frequently a prophet will give a description of conditions and events that were true both in the time of ancient Israel and of that at the time of Christ. The characteristics of the Jews are such that their conduct has been "true to form" all through the ages. That is why it so often happens that a prophecy will apply both to ancient and later Jewish history. We know the line running through many of the verses of this chapter not only was a description of conditions in the time of the prophet, but was fulfilled in the days of Christ for he quoted it and so applied it (Matt. 15: 8, 9). If there are some statements that must be applied particularly to the time of Christ, it will be noted as they come in order. Otherwise, the meaning of the several expressions will be explained in connection with each verse. *Lord hath poured*, etc. is a Biblical way of saying the Lord gave the people over to the kind of life they were determined to follow. If they were bound to think and do so and so, He would use no force to prevent it. This is the meaning of the many places in the Bible where it might seem that God caused the people to go wrong or to fall into some sinful state. It means he gave them over to such a state because their conduct called for and deserved it. (Ps. 81: 11, 12; Ezk. 20: 24, 25, 29; Acts 7: 42; Rom. 1: 24; 2 Thess. 2: 11, 12.) This is the sense in which God gave people to have their "own way" sometimes.

Verse 11. The senses of the people had become so dulled by their sins that it was compared to a man of learning excusing his inability to read a book on the pretense that it was sealed. But that was an excuse only as the next verse will show.

Verse 12. This man did not say anything about the book being sealed, but that he was not learned. That could not have been the real cause of his trouble, for the one in the preceding verse had the learning yet could not understand the book. The explanation is the dull state of their minds due to their repeated indulgence in and preference for the things that were coarse and worldly.

Verse 13. This is the particular passage that Christ cited in Matt. 15: 9. *Mouth and lip service* is merely a profession and comes from one who is not sincerely devoted. *Their fear* refers to their form of service; it was regulated by the teaching of men. This is exactly the thought in Col. 2: 22.

Verse 14. The leaders of the Jewish nation were filled with self-esteem, and it caused them to think their wisdom was exceptional. They were to be so completely overcome in their plans that it would baffle them.

Verse 15. One lexicon definition of *counsel* is "plan." The head men of the Jews thought their plans could be kept hid from the Lord. At least they tried to do so, and because God did not always expose them on the spot they were so foolish as to feel secure in their unrighteousness.

Verse 16. *Turning of things upside down* was Isaiah's way of accusing them of perverseness or contrariness as to God's law. Their responsibility was the same as in the case of a potter and his work. The clay would not take the blame if it was not made into something useful but would leave that up to the potter. Likewise the Jewish leaders could blame none but themselves for the worthlessness of their life's products.

Verse 17. The "telescope" was lengthened and the prophet saw the time of Israel's return from captivity. This was in keeping with God's great love for his people. He determined to punish them with captivity, but he tempered the threat of that prediction with one of the opposite character. Most of the forecasts from here to the close of the chapter were so general in their nature that we can find them fulfilled also in the days of the Gospel. However, the immediate application was to the time when the Jews would recover from their fallen state at the hands of the Babylonians, which had been brought on them through the stubborn blindness of the leaders in Jerusalem.

Verse 18. The *deaf* were the ones who had stopped their ears against the truth, and the *blind* were those who had closed their eyes against the light of God's instructions. Chapter 1: 3 and Jer. 5: 21 should be consulted in connection with this subject.

Verse 19. The *meek and poor* had been imposed upon by the selfish leaders, but after the return to their own country these unfortunate citizens

will be able to rejoice in their freedom, not only from the captivity among the heathen but from the wicked leaders among their own people who had taken advantage of them in former years.

Verse 20. *Terrible one and scorner* is the same one as *scornful*, ch. 28: 14. It refers to the haughty leaders among the Jews who had been largely responsible for all of the misfortunes that befell them. It was true they were to share in the blessings of the release from captivity, but the class described in the preceding verse would get special satisfaction from the release by observing that they were also delivered from the tyranny of those described in this verse.

Verse 21. The wicked leaders is still the subject of this verse. *Make a man an offender for a word* means they caused an innocent man to be convicted unjustly through their false testimony. *Lay a snare for him that reproveth* denotes that they misled the judges by their false testimony. They would *turn aside the just* or defraud him of his rights by quibbling over a trivial point.

Verse 22. *Redeemed Abraham*. The Jews descended from Abraham, and when they were redeemed from captivity it was considered as the Lord's having redeemed the great patriarch. *Shall not now be ashamed* means the feeling of triumph the people would have upon their deliverance from captivity.

Verse 23. When the people shall see the good work of the Lord among them they will rejoice. They will *sanctify* or bless the *Holy One* for his wonderful favors.

Verse 24. The leaders who had erred in their conduct will learn better. They will learn it the "hard way" which will be through the experience of the captivity.

### ISAIAH 30

Verse 1. The *rebellious children* is a term of general application for the Jews as a nation. It could be justly so applied because the common people endorsed the teaching of the prophets and the doings of the religious leaders. (Jer. 5: 31.) That is why it was said in this verse that the *children* took counsel but not of the Lord.

Verse 2. The Israelites were always interested in Egypt and frequently showed a desire to go there for assistance or other advantages. *Walk*

*to go down* indicates their walk or practices were inclined toward Egypt. They preferred the advice they thought they could obtain from Pharaoh to that of God.

Verse 3. When they would expect Egypt to give them the support they wanted it would not be realized. This would shame them and throw them into confusion.

Verse 4. *Zoan* and *Hanes* were places in Egypt. The Israelite chieftains were so confident of receiving help from Egypt that they came to these localities to receive it.

Verse 5. Their expectations were to be disappointed and the Egyptians were to prove to be the shame of the Israelites.

Verse 6. See the comments at ch. 13: 1 for the meaning of *burden*. The uselessness of looking to Egypt for anything is still the subject of this verse. *South* is a reference to that country from its direction from Palestine. *Trouble and anguish* was true both as concerned the actual experience of Israel with Egypt in the past, and also in view of the disappointment that was awaiting them upon their approach to that country for help. Reference to the beasts was a description of the wild and rough nature of the country under consideration. The Israelites were represented as carrying whole beast loads of *riches* to Egypt as presents (see the comments at Gen. 32: 13; 1 Sam. 10: 27), to purchase the services of that country. The prophet then commented that those people would be of no profit to Israel.

Verse 7. Even if the Egyptians should try to help Israel, it would be of no avail if the Lord were minded to punish his people. *Strength* is defined in the lexicon as "bluster," and *sit still* means to refrain from any activities. The thought is that all of the show and ado that might seem to be coming from the Egyptians would amount to nothing and the Israelites would have been as well off not to expect anything.

Verse 8. The Lord directed the prophet to write this declaration in a *table* (tablet) as a permanent record for future reference.

Verse 9. God was accusing his own people of being rebellious and given to lies. This accusation was to be written in a book that later generations might know why He had dealt thus with Israel.



Verse 10. *Seers and prophets* as used in this verse referred especially to those who not only could see into the future, but who admonished the people concerning their duties. The people did not want to be disturbed in their selfishness by unpleasant rebukes or threats of the future. The descriptive word *deceits* was not what Israel actually called for, but was the prophet's description of the things called for by the disobedient people. See the comments on a like passage in ch. 28: 15, and see also the statement in Jer. 5: 31 regarding the general attitude of the people.

Verse 11. The Jews never demanded directly that the prophets were to turn the Lord against them, but that was what their clamor meant in the view of Isaiah.

Verse 12. The Lord then made a direct charge against his people, that they *despised* (belittled) his word and chose the way of fraud and oppression.

Verse 13. The downfall of the nation was sure to come and it was not far off. The condition was likened to a weakened place in a wall that was liable to fall any time.

Verse 14. This verse is a figurative picture of the breakup of Judah by the siege and captivity that was near at hand. A vessel of pottery was broken so completely to pieces that not a scrap was left large enough to carry a coal of fire or a drink of water. The fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in 2 Ki. 24 and 25.

Verse 15. The last four words of this verse indicate the meaning of the passage. *Returning and rest* denotes a state of trust and satisfaction. Had the people of Israel been content to rely on the Lord instead of turning to Egypt or other heathen nations, they would have been *saved* or preserved from the calamity about to be brought upon them.

Verse 16. The first clause repeats the close of the preceding verse. The people of Israel boasted that they would help themselves by the horses and other means of rapid travel, and they thought to obtain these things from the Egyptians and other heathen nations. So the prophet warned them that they would travel, indeed, by such means or causes and at such a rate of speed, but it would be on account of the cavalry and speed of their pursuers at the time of the invasion of the enemy.

Verse 17. The prediction of the preceding verse was continued in this. These predictions may be found also in Lev. 26: 8 and Deut. 28: 25. The fulfillment may be seen in 2 Ki. 24 and 25. *Left as a beacon* refers to the same state of isolation as was predicted in ch. 1: 8. *Beacon* is from TOREN and Strong's definition is, "a pole (as a mast or flag-staff)." The deserted condition was likened to that of an army that was completely routed until nothing was left but a solitary pole on top of a hill.

Verse 18. The patience and compassion of the Lord is the most wonderful thing that was ever known to man. Whatever chastisement the people deserved, it was always administered in love and for their own good. (See Heb. 12: 5-11; Rev. 3: 19.) *Wait* is from CHAKAH and Strong's definition is, "properly to adhere to; hence to await." The meaning of the verse is that God would give his people the punishment they needed, including the period of the captivity, but would not lose patience with them. He would wait like a loving parent until they had learned their lesson, then receive them back again into his favor. In view of such a kind and indulgent Father the prophet declared all would be *blessed* (happy) who would *wait* (rely) on Him.

Verse 19. In keeping with the spirit of compassion described in the preceding verse, this one predicts the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. The Biblical account of that event is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. For the secular account of it see the quotation in connection with ch. 14: 1.

Verse 20. *Bread of adversity and water of affliction* is a figurative description of the sorrowful state of mind the people would be in while in the captivity. (See Psa. 137.) *Teachers* is from YARA and Strong's definition as it applies to this verse is, "figuratively to point out (as if by aiming the finger), to teach." *Corner* is from KANAPH and a part of Strong's definition is, "an edge or extremity." The meaning is that even in their distress the Lord (their teacher) will not be far away, but will be using their very sad experience to lead them to a better life. (See verse 22.)

Verse 21. This verse continues the thought at the close of the preceding one.

Verse 22. This verse predicts their

cure from idolatry. For the historical fulfillment of this prediction see the quotation at ch. 1: 25. Not only did Israel turn from the practice of idolatry, but their abhorrence of it was compared to the disposal of a defiled garment.

Verse 23. This passage is a promise that after returning to their own land, the people of Israel would be permitted again to use their farms. The land had been let rest from cultivation for 70 years to recover the years of rest taken from it by the greed of the nation, but after the return it would again be tilled.

Verse 24. What livestock had remained while the citizens were away had to live on the rough and wild vegetation that grew of itself. Afterward the cattle will be fed upon grain and roughage that has been properly harvested and prepared.

Verse 25. The subject still is the triumph of Israel over their foes. The verse is highly figurative in describing the returned prosperity after getting back into their own country. *Great slaughter and towers fall* refers to the overthrow of the Babylonians who had been holding the Jews in captivity.

Verse 26. The good fortune of the Israelites continues to be the subject, expressed in symbolic language for comparison. The dark years of bondage in Babylon will give place to the great light of freedom in their own land. *Breach and stroke* refers to the broken condition the Jewish nation suffered by being taken out of their own land and their institutions being left in ruins.

Verse 27. After the people of God had been punished sufficiently, he turned his wrath against the nation that had been the instrument for the chastisement. *Comeeth from far* shows that God occupies the space even to distant points, yet he can cover the expanse and come to any spot where it is necessary.

Verse 28. The wrath of God against the Babylonians is still the subject of the prophet. Of course it is being described in figurative terms, which is in keeping with most of the expressions in the prophetic writings. *Sift the nations* means to shake them down because of their vanity or national pride.

Verse 29. The subject is again the joyful feeling of the people of God because of their release from the cap-

tivity. The exercises described are those in connection with the services to the Lord and they are enjoyable.

Verse 30. In several verses the prophet has been writing on the two subjects, now on that of the wrath of God against the Babylonians and now on the joy of the Jews over their deliverance from the captivity. In this verse it is the arm of the Lord as a heavy power pressing down with indignation upon the foe, all of it being expressed in figures of speech. The Lord's *voice* refers to the mighty predictions that He made against the people who were to bring the captivity upon them of Jerusalem. It was to be done as a chastisement of the Jews for their sins, but the instrument of that service was in turn to feel the mighty hand of God in righteous revenge.

Verse 31. It appears that the term *Assyrians* is used by the prophet from time to time with a various application. While that people was in power under that name they actually persecuted God's people (2 Ki. 17 and 18), and when the Babylonians came into power, the term Assyrians was used sometimes because they all occupied practically the same territory in their turn. Hence it matters little which term we are reading, the final results of God's wrath as predicted were fulfilled.

Verse 32. *Grounded staff* was the rod of God's rule against any who incurred the divine wrath. In the present case it was the destruction of the foe who had been in control of God's people and had held them in captivity. *Tabrets and harps* were instruments of music that were used in connection with any successful triumph over an enemy.

Verse 33. *Tophet* is defined by Strong as follows: "a place of cremation." It referred to a place near Jerusalem where fires were kept burning to destroy the bodies of animals and convicted criminals. But previously the place had been used for the burning of sacrifices, even the living children cast into the fire, to the heathen god Moloch (2 Ki. 23: 10). It is used figuratively in our verse to signify that God would destroy the Babylonian Empire and sacrifice it to His righteous indignation. *The pile thereof is fire and much wood* is figurative, and referred to the same thought expressed in the preceding sentence. No literal fire and wood was to be used,

but the figure was based upon the fact that such literal elements were used on the altars in *Tophet* where sacrifices were offered to the heathen god.

### ISAIAH 31

Verse 1. The chapter starts with another rebuke of the Jews for their reliance upon Egypt. I request the student to read carefully all of the comments on ch. 30: 2-7. The present verse gives some of the specific items of interest that induced Israel to turn to Egypt. That country had long been noted for its horses, and God's people had been warned on the subject (Deut. 17: 16; 1 Ki. 10: 28). It was bad enough for them to seek help from Egypt, but worse still they did not even seek counsel of the Lord.

Verse 2. *Will not call back* means the Lord would not reverse his predictions against his disobedient people. He was determined to *arise against* them and also against any who would be so rash as to offer them help.

Verse 3. The leading thought in this verse is that human strength is useless when it is arrayed against the Lord. No matter how many or how much are the men and power that are conspiring against God, they will surely fail in the end. (Rom. 8: 41.)

Verse 4. The helpless efforts of human shepherds against the strength and destructiveness of vicious beasts is likened to the opposition by heathens against God.

Verse 5. Birds fly over the heads of men and thus are superior to them in the surety of their movements. This fact is used to compare the independence of God in his defence of his beloved people when they are misused by the nations of the world.

Verse 6. God has decreed to defend his people against the heathen nations even though they (his people) had revolted from their Lord. The prophet gave a general exhortation to all people to turn unto Him from whom Israel had revolted.

Verse 7. God's successful dealing with the foe who had held his people in captivity will free them from that captivity. The purpose of that chastisement was to cure them from the proneness to idolatry. Having accomplished that purpose the instrument of that service was to be overthrown. The present verse was a prediction of

that cure, and the historical confirmation of it was quoted at ch. 1: 25.

Verse 8. For comments as to the *Assyrians* see those at ch. 7: 17 and 30: 31. The great Babylonian Empire fell on the night of Belshazzar's feast (Dan. 5: 30, 31). It is true that the sword was used and doubtless many were slain; but that was not the way the city was entered. The walls were not stormed and the defending army subdued by military force of arms. The city was entered by the peaceful strategy and activities of Cyrus. For the historical account of this see the quotation at ch. 13: 7, 8. *Flee from the sword and his young men shall be discomfited* (confused and scattered). On this point I shall quote a part of the historical note referred to above. "When this was said they [the Persians] marched; and, of course that they met with some they fell on and killed, some fled, and some set up a clamor."

Verse 9. This verse continues the line of thought running through the preceding one, which is the complete overthrow of the Babylonian Empire. *Fire* is used in the sense of home fires and signifies one's headquarters or dwelling place. That was said of Zion which was the capital in Jerusalem. The overthrow of Babylon by the Persians was by the decree of God, whose headquarters were in Zion.

### ISAIAH 32

Verse 1. It has been often stated, and correctly so, that Isaiah said more about Christ and his church than all the other Old Testament prophets put together. Many times, too, he wrote his predictions just after having dealt with ancient Israel's recovery from the long captivity and restoration to power in their own land. It was appropriate that he do so, for the reign of Christ, like the restoration of Israel, came after a period of spiritual decline. Although this and the following chapter will be leading up to a more direct picture of the Gospel plan of salvation, the prophet will intersperse his writing with frequent denunciations of the Jewish nation. Their leaders especially had been corrupt so frequently that the Lord wished to keep them reminded of the effect it had upon the lot of their national inheritance. He also will make charges against certain heathen people who had shown enmity against those of the Lord. I

trust these general remarks will be borne in mind as the study of the text is continued. *A king shall reign in righteousness* evidently refers to Christ. At the time Isaiah wrote this the Jewish nation had already been living under kings for hundreds of years, so that fact would be nothing new. But most of them were unrighteous, and the prediction of the present verse was looking to the future and would mean Christ.

Verse 2. Jesus was both God and man and was therefore a suitable person to provide comfort for others who were men only (Heb. 2: 16-18). The spiritual comfort that was to come to the followers of Christ was compared to a shelter or *covert*, to water for the thirsty and cooling shade in a parched and desert land.

Verse 3. Further benefits under Christ were likened to improved seeing and hearing.

Verse 4. The superior instruction to be had by the citizens of the kingdom of Christ was seen by the prophet. The *rash* means the ones of poor judgment and the *stammerers* are those who have poor speech. All will be benefited by the instruction offered in the spiritual school of Christ which means the church. They will be taught to "speak as the oracles of God."

Verse 5. *Vile* means stupid and impious, and *liberal* means gracious and friendly. *Churl* means stingy and *bountiful* means freehearted. Under the reign of Christ a man will be given credit only for his true character.

Verse 6. This verse shows why such characters as are described in the preceding one will not be given endorsement in the kingdom of Christ. It is because a vile man would speak *villany* (wickedness), and his heart would plan some iniquity in a hypocritical manner. He would deprive the spiritually hungry and thirsty of that which would satisfy them. In Matt. 5: 6 Jesus shows that such desire is for righteousness and the evil characters of this verse would interfere with it.

Verse 7. The *churl* or stingy man will use any means within his reach, whether right or wrong, to gain the possessions of the poor. Such a person will make up a story as a basis for his demand for the other man's money. *Needy speaketh right* means the poor man complains of the treatment he is

being accorded by the greedy man, and even when his complaint is just, he is forced to give up his belongings. This kind of mistreatment was a common practice among the people (ch. 5: 8, 23; 58: 3).

Verse 8. A man who is friendly and freehearted will scheme and plan, but not for the purpose of defrauding another. Instead, he will be seeking ways to help some needy person, and as a result he will be backed up or caused to *stand* by the very good provisions he had brought about for others.

Verse 9. *Women* at ease were those who wasted their time and energy with their vanities. See a detailed description of them in the verses at ch. 3: 16-23, and read the comments on the several verses.

Verse 10. These frivolous women were told their days of luxurious living would give way to years of trouble. They were destined to be taken away into captivity along with the men. *Vintage shall fail* means the source of their extravagance would fail.

Verse 11. *Strip you and make you bare* sounds like an order or command. It is the prophetic style of making a prediction that such a thing would take place. Their flashy and extravagant life was to be reversed, and their perfumery and personal make-up would be replaced by opposite conditions. (See ch. 3: 24.)

Verse 12. *Lament for the teats*. The first word is from CAPHAD which Strong defines, "a primitive root; properly to tear the hair and beat the breasts (as Orientals do in grief); generally to lament; by implication to wail." The last word is from SHON, and Strong's definition is, "in its original sense of contraction; the breast of a woman or animal (as bulging)." The meaning of the verse is that they shall beat their breasts in lamentation over the loss of their fields and vineyards. The fields and vines furnished a source of their luxurious living, and that was to be denied them because they would be in a foreign land. They then could only lament the loss of those things which they had so thoughtlessly misused.

Verse 13. This verse could have a figurative meaning, for *thorns* and *briers* fitly represent a condition of desolation and distress. But it was also fulfilled literally in the years of the captivity. The land was to be



given a 70-year rest in order to regain those taken from it by their disregard for the Sabbatical year. (See Lev. 25.)

Verse 14. The forsaken condition of the land during the captivity is the subject of this verse. (See ch. 1: 7.)

Verse 15. After the Jews will have suffered sufficiently to satisfy the Lord's plan of chastisement, the captivity will be ended and they will return to their own land. The verses including this to the end of the chapter should be marked by a bracket and titled "the return from captivity." This favor is described by the prophet as the spirit's being poured upon them from on high. The Biblical account of the fulfillment is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The historical confirmation is at ch. 14: 1.

Verse 16. *Judgment* is used in the sense of justice for the people. It will be a contrast with the state of tyranny the leaders imposed on the common people previously.

Verse 17. *Peace* will be brought about as a result of righteousness in the rulers and hence will be just. *Quietness* and *assurance* mean the same as peace.

Verse 18. *Peaceable habitation* means the Jews will again reside in their own land in peace. The enemy nation will have served the Lord's purpose of chastisement for the disobedient people of Israel, and will not be permitted to enslave them again.

Verse 19. A short diversion to predict the downfall of Babylon is the subject of this verse. That event was necessary to make possible the return of Israel to Palestine.

Verse 20. The waters of peace and prosperity is the figurative reference to the happy condition that will be enjoyed after the nation returns from captivity. The people will again be permitted to follow their agricultural pursuits. The land will have received its deserved rest and its owners may use it for their personal good.

### ISAIAH 33

Verse 1. Many of the statements of this verse could truly be applied generally because of the principles involved. However, following close on the line of thought at the close of the preceding verse, the evident reference is to the Babylonians. They had never been wronged by the people of God, yet they had wronged them by taking them away into captivity. Therefore,

when the captivity is over—*when thou shalt cease to spoil*—that people in turn shall be spoiled. It will be done through the instrumentality of the Persians but by the decree of God.

Verse 2. This verse predicts the prayerful state of mind the Jews will be in while in the land of their captors. (see Psa. 137.)

Verse 3. *Lifting up of thyself* denotes that God will be the cause of the overthrow of Babylon by the hand of the Persians. The great world empires were composed of many smaller nations, hence the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire would mean that *the nations were scattered* in the sense of the prophet's expression.

Verse 4. The pronouns *your* and *he* refer to the Lord who was to direct the movements of the Persians against the Babylonians. *Caterpillar* and *locust* were species of the same insect. Their widespread ravaging of useful vegetation is used to compare the thorough overthrow of the enemy by the Lord.

Verse 5. The Lord dwells *on high*, that is in Heaven, but Zion or Jerusalem was the earthly headquarters of His dominions. He had endowed that place with *judgment and righteousness*, which assured the citizens of their just consideration.

Verse 6. All justice must be according to wisdom and knowledge, therefore God stabilizes his *times* or period of his reign by such qualities. Such endowment will give to His kingdom the strength of salvation. The fear or respect for the Lord is indeed a great treasure, and such a prize will be for those who are faithful citizens of His.

Verse 7. Let it be remembered the leading thought in these verses is the Lord's wrath against the Babylonians, even though their services were wanted in the chastisement of the wayward Jews. Because of that wrath the motives of the *valiant ones* or messengers, and the *ambassadors* of the enemy shall be disappointed.

Verse 8. It will be well for the student to read very carefully the comments on ch. 32: 1. This will refresh him as to the intermixing by the prophet of the references to the disobedient Jews and the cruel Babylonians. Some of the shortcomings of the Jews are included in this and some following verses.

Verse 9. *The earth* is a figurative

reference to the land of the Jews. (See at ch. 24: 1 etc.) This is a prophecy of the depression that was to come on the nation because of its sins. *Lebanon* and the other places named were choice spots in Palestine. They were all to be despoiled of their benefits by the invasion of the Babylonians.

Verse 10. This is expressed in the first person because it was the Lord who was to cause the invasion. The foreign nation would be acting (unintentionally) as an agent to bring about the chastisement of a disobedient people.

Verse 11. This refers to the helplessness of the Jews when their land is attacked. It is compared to the disappointment a person would have whose harvest would leave nothing but the straw and chaff. The grain will have been taken by the foe.

Verse 12. *Lime* is from *syro* which Strong defines, "lime (as boiling when slacked)." The boiling of slacking lime and the burning of very combustible fagots is used as a figurative description of the national destruction.

Verse 13. *Far off* and *near* is a warning that all the people should take notice. *Have done* is past tense in grammatical form, but is a prophetic style of predicting something yet to come by the decree of the Lord.

Verse 14. *Sinners in Zion* has special reference to the leaders of the Jewish nation who were chiefly responsible for the corruptions. The *fire* and *burning* means the same as that of verse 12. The leading characters are called hypocrites because they had used their religious rituals as a covering for their wickedness. (See ch. 1: 10; 3: 13-15; 58: 3, 4; Amos 6: 6.) The hypocrites are predicted as asking how they can stand such burning chastisement.

Verse 15. The question of the preceding verse is answered in this. I request the student again to read the long comment at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary. Note especially the part that sets forth the advantages of those who were religious among the leaders, for that is the meaning of this verse.

Verse 16. The thought of the preceding verse is continued in this. The righteous man shall have a high place in the eyes of the Lord. His refuge with God will be as strong as a fort built of rocks, and his provisions will

be an abundance of food and drink. Of course this would be true both literally and spiritually.

Verse 17. Isaiah seldom leaves a prophecy touching the improved condition of ancient Israel after a period of depression, without seeing something pertaining to the time of Christ. Hence the title "Evangelical [of the New Testament] Prophet" that has been generally ascribed to him. He is introducing a few verses now on that subject, and the *king in his beauty* is evidently a reference to Christ.

Verse 18. After the captivity was over, the Jews could muse over their past experiences with great satisfaction. They could ask with exultation about their former tormentors who had been subdued. *Receiver* (of tribute) and *towers* refers to the officers and armaments of those tormentors who were finally defeated. The circumstance also illustrates the spiritual victory of those who will be in the kingdom of Christ.

Verse 19. *Thou shalt not see*, etc., means first that the Jews were not again to be enslaved by such people as the Babylonians. They were described as a fierce people; a people who used a tongue foreign to the Jews. No, they will never again be forced to look at such a despotism as the one that had forced them into bondage, for all world powers were destined to be overthrown never to rise again.

Verse 20. The preceding verse brings the scene down to the time of Christ when the *king* of verse 17 was to take the throne. That kingdom was destined to cause the final end of such institutions as have been under description in the preceding verses. The same fact is predicted in Dan. 2: 44. As a result of this edict of the Lord, his people will no more have to look upon those institutions; instead, they will look upon *Zion the city of solemnities*. *Tabernacle* and *stakes* and *cords* refers to the temporary nature of the former structure in which the Lord's people worshiped him. It will now be the kingdom of Christ that is destined to "stand forever."

Verse 21. The practices of mankind are often used in the Bible to illustrate either by comparison or contrast, the spiritual benefits and enjoyments under Christ. A *galley with oars* was an ancient form of ship that was propelled by oars that were operated by human strength. The oars were arranged in long rows on the

sides of the vessel, and those rows of oars were called *galleys*. In many cases they were worked by prisoners who were penalized or "sentenced to the galleys." The circumstance was used by the prophet to illustrate (by contrast) the freedom enjoyed in "the ship of Zion."

Verses 22, 23. The subject of a sea-going vessel as an illustration of the ship of Zion is still in the eye of the prophet as he looks through the "telescope." *Tacklings* means "inheritance," and *loosed* is defined "to disperse." The meaning is that in the church the good things will be for all, not just for the selfish leaders as they did it in ancient Israel. *Strengthen* is defined "to seize," and *mast* means a "flag-staff" as a signal of defense. The poor had previously been denied their rights and they could not help themselves. *Could not spread the sail* denotes that the common people did not have any voice in the management of the vessel. The last two clauses are less figurative and means the benefits will be fairly distributed. The verse as a whole means that in the reign of Christ will be equal privileges for all, and no discrimination will be made between persons. (See Gal. 3: 28.)

Verse 24. In the kingdom of Christ there need be no spiritual sickness which means a condition of sinfulness. The remedy for such illness is the blood of Christ, applied to all who will comply with the conditions. The true inhabitants of this new spiritual country need not complain, saying *I am sick*, for such a state will have been removed by the healing virtues of the blood of the Son of God. (See 1 John 1: 7.)

#### ISAIAH 34

Verse 1. Before launching again into the favorite subject of the time of Christ, the "telescope" was shortened to give the prophet a view of the world in general. Various heathen nations had opposed God's institutions all through the years, some of them more viciously than others. The terms used in this chapter will be found to have a figurative application. The political and national "heavens" or skies had been overcast with clouds of confusion, and filled with stars or rulers who were wicked and unmindful of the Maker of all things. Even the Jewish as well as the Patriarchal Dispensation was polluted with religious and moral evil. The Lord then

was ready to bring the whole mass of mankind under condemnation, and demand attention to the great "day" (Psa. 118: 24) of the Lord. The various warning predictions uttered in this chapter will be considered as we approach the verses in their order.

Verse 2. The indignation of God against the nations is still the subject. *Hath destroyed* is past tense in form but future in thought because such is the style of prophetic language as a rule.

Verse 3. *Mountains* in symbolic language means governments and other public institutions. They were destined to be *melted* or dissolved by *their blood*. The specific definition of the last word is "bloodshed," sometimes rendered "blood-guiltiness." The leaders of these institutions had been so guilty of crimes against the people that it was finally to be the cause of the overthrow of the institutions themselves.

Verse 4. With the foregoing thoughts before us, we should have no trouble in understanding this verse, and not apply it to "the last great day" as so many public speakers dramatically do. It had reference to the break-up of the national and political "heavens" that was to take place at the coming into power of the reign of Christ. I very earnestly insist that the student read again, very carefully, the comments on verse one above. If a scroll or written document is rolled up it becomes a "closed book" or a thing of the past. These figurative heavens were to be thus rolled up because the power of God would cause them to "fold up" to use a familiar figure of speech. The end of those men and institutions is also illustrated by a leaf or fig that is caused to fall to the ground and be allowed to go to waste.

Verse 5. Special attention will now be given to one of the heathen nations that had opposed the Lord and his people. That was *Idumea* which is another name for the Edomites or the descendants of Esau. *Sword bathed in heaven*. The second word means "to satisfy" or be made ready. The sword of God's wrath was prepared or made ready for use, and the place of such preparation was to be in heaven. The preparation, then, would be complete and it would bring swift vengeance on the wicked people of Edom.

Verse 6. The imagery is changed from warfare to sacrificing and feasting. The Lord's sword is used to take

rich game for use in the feast, and the blood is shed according to the established law that it should not be eaten. The choicest of the animals are to be slain for the occasion. *Sacrifice in Bozrah* means the sacrifice was to be at the expense of Bozrah which was an important city of Edom.

Verse 7. A unicorn is a large, wild bull. *Bullocks* and *bulls* are practically the same except the second is used more figuratively to include strong and outstanding men. Strong's definition of the original is, "chiefest, mighty (one), stout [hearted], strong (one), valiant." The literal definition cited should be applied because the whole prediction in the passage is one of defeat of the wicked men of the Edomite nation. However, in the figurative view of the event, the prophet saw the whole land saturated with blood of the victims slaughtered for the great sacrifice.

Verse 8. Paul said (Rom. 12: 19) that vengeance belongs to the Lord. In the present verse the Lord's vengeance is predicted to be poured out to recompense for the injustices committed by the leaders in Edom. They had perpetrated those evils against Zion which represented the nation of the Lord.

Verse 9. This verse through verse 15 should be marked as a bracket and regarded as a prediction against the land of Edom. Many of the conditions sound like those made against Babylon (ch. 13: 19-22), but nothing strange should be thought of it. If a territory should be as completely shorn of attention and care as was predicted of these places, the result would be largely as predicted as a natural consequence. That would be especially true if the Lord decreed that the caretaking was never to be resumed. The *pitch* is the same as tar and the *brimstone* is like sulphur. The two elements would be set on fire which would fill the land with sulphurous fumes.

Verse 10. This verse is what makes the prediction permanent. The territory was to be made lie waste and be impassible continually.

Verse 11. The land in general was to lie in the terrible state described above so that human beings would be unable to endure in it. However, there would be certain isolated spots where the doleful creatures such as are mentioned could live and propagate from generation to generation. Hence, even

if man could think of avoiding the direct effects of the burning tar and sulphur, he could not endure the presence of these horrible creatures. *Live in confusion* indicates the state of disorder that would come into the territory under the above-described condition. *Stones of emptiness* denotes a field barren of all useful products and scattered over with stones.

Verse 12. This call is used in irony. A great occasion will be going on and the nobles will be invited to attend. But the invitation will be in mockery for they will not be in reach, having been destroyed or banished.

Verse 13. The desolation of the headquarters of the nation of the Edomites will be indicated by the wilderness that will be in evidence.

Verse 14. The doleful site of the place or people will be inhabited by unclean beasts. They will find intimacy with each other and fill the air with their howls. It is characteristic of the owl to prefer the night, hence such unclean creatures will find rest in this abandoned spot.

Verse 15. *Great owl* is a species of the darkness-loving fowl, and a vulture is one that lives on filth. These vile creatures will not be alone when they come to this place, but each will have her mate. A fowl may be able to *make her nest and lay* but the eggs would not hatch unless the female has relations with the *mate*.

Verse 16. *Seek ye out*, etc., means to note what the book of the Lord declares. The declaration is that *no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate*. The prophet had predicted that the land of Edom was to be occupied by such creatures as are described in the preceding verses. That could be accomplished by the Lord's power in miraculously extending the lives of the originals. Instead of doing it that way, it will be done by seeing that at all times each creature will have a mate, so he can propagate and continue the production of its kind. *My mouth* means the mouth of the Lord, although it was through the services of the prophet that the prediction was made. When anything is uttered either by the Lord direct or by some agency at His direction, it makes that word infallible.

Verse 17. *Cast the lot . . . by line* means the various creatures will be restricted from interfering with each other. Some of them might be inclined even to destroy each other and



thus work against the fulfillment of the prediction. This will be prevented by the line that will keep each species in its place. By thus prescribing the state of these unclean creatures they will continue to exist and reproduce in the land. Hence *they will possess it forever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein*, thereby demonstrating to the whole world the surety of all the Lord's predictions.

### ISAIAH 35

Verse 1. This entire chapter is a prophecy of the Christian Dispensation, otherwise called the kingdom of Christ, with its many advantages and obligations. Many of the items are figurative, the prophet using them to illustrate the subject either by comparison or contrast. Other expressions, however, are not figurative, although they are spiritual rather than material in application. This is one of the most noted of Isaiah's chapters and we should give it our best consideration. This verse is one of the figurative ones, comparing the refreshing effect of serving Christ to that of finding a blooming rose in a dreary desert.

Verse 2. The rejoicing with *joy and singing* is a direct reference to some of the exercises engaged in by those in the service of Christ. (Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16; Jas. 5: 13.) *Lebanon* is a noted mountain range in northern Palestine and was famous for its outlook above other ranges. It was also celebrated in poetry and song for the beautiful cedars with their fragrance, and for the texture of the wood. *Carmel* is the name of a mountain not far from the Mediterranean Sea, and its greatest fame was in connection with the contest which Elijah conducted there with the worshipers of Baal (1 Ki. 18). The significance of *Sharon* will be best appreciated by a quotation from Funk and Wagnalls Bible Dictionary: "SHARON, probably from a root meaning 'plain' or 'level country': The undulating [rolling] plain extending from Joppa and Ramleh northward along the Mediterranean coast to Mt. Carmel, about 50 miles long and varying from 6 to 12 miles in breadth. It is unusually fertile (Isa. 65: 10; Song 2: 1). The oak still flourishes in the northern portion as probably in the days of Isaiah (35: 2); the southern portion is richly cultivated. In early spring the luxuriant grass and richly colored flowers render the plain the garden of Palestine."

With the description we have of these places it is easy to see why they were used to compare the glories of the kingdom of Christ and the desirability of being members thereof.

Verse 3. This verse is a prediction of the spiritual benefits there were to be received from Christ. In His service the humblest of mankind may be encouraged and given strength not possible for those who depend upon human sources alone. Paul gives us this same thought in 2 Cor. 12: 10; Eph. 6: 10.

Verse 4. *Say to them* is a prophet's form of promising these things to the ones who will accept Christ. *Fearful heart* means those who are unsettled about their prospects. They were to be given the assurances that in Christ they need have no fear.

Verse 5. One outstanding meaning of *opened* is to "observe" or "be aware." Under the reign of Christ men would be led to observe the teachings offered and they would not be blind to the beauties of holiness. To hear in a spiritual sense means to understand and heed what is said. The instructions that were to be offered in the kingdom of Christ would be so clear that the commonest person would be able to grasp it.

Verse 6. The lame (spiritually) would be shown the right of way (see v. 8 below), and would be given strength to walk therein. All of these terms are figurative and yet refer to a direct condition of a spiritual character. Just as a physically dumb man would be miraculously helped were he to be given the power to sing, so the man of the world will be afforded the ability to sing praises to God. A stream of water in a desert would be such a wonderful thing that one whose mouth had become parched through lack of moisture would be enabled to sing for joy by the supply of water.

Verse 7. The use of figures is continued as an effective means of showing the great advantages to be enjoyed in the kingdom of Christ. The illustrations are used in contrast for the good effect of the impression. There are two of the figures in this verse, one dealing with a desert condition and the other with some vile creatures. They were to be made to give way to a condition of life and peace.

Verse 8. *Highway* is from MASHLUL and Strong defines it as follows: "from SAWLAL, to mound up (especially a turnpike); figuratively, to

exalt; reflex, to oppose (as by a dam): cast up, exalt (self), extol, make plain, raise up." *Way* is from *DEREK* which Strong defines, "A road (as trodden); figuratively a course of life or mode of action . . . from *DAREK*, to tread; by implication to walk." The first word means the same as the "narrow way" spoken of by Christ in Matt. 7: 14. The second means the way a man should conduct himself while in this narrow way. *It shall be called* can truly be applied to either separately or to both combined; in either case the idea of holiness is present. Jeremiah (6: 16) had the same subject in mind when he wrote of the *old paths*, applying both to the highway of truth which needs to be sought, and also the manner of one who would "walk therein." Moffatt renders the first part of the verse, "a stainless highroad shall appear, the name, 'The Sacred Way.'" *The unclean* means persons who have not been made free from their sins by obedience to the Gospel. In entering upon this highway of righteousness one must submit to the requirements of the King, and that will cleanse him from his sins and qualify him to travel in the holy pathway. *Shall be for those*. The pronoun stands for the ones already described as having been made free from their spiritual uncleanness. They are specifically called *the redeemed* in the next verse. *Wayfaring* is from a combination of two Hebrew words, one meaning "to walk" and the other "a highway." The word simply means the men who are walking on the *highway* defined at the beginning of this paragraph. A *fool* as used here does not mean an idiot or one who is altogether unintelligent, for such a person would not be in this highway since he is not responsible and hence has no need of being cleansed. It means an ordinary man, one who does not possess any special amount of keen insight. The word *though* is not in the original and is not called for by the context since it adds nothing to the thought. *Err* is from *TAWAH* and the definition of Strong is, "A primitive root; to vacillate, i.e. reel or stray (literally or figuratively); also causatively of both." The thought is that a man of ordinary intelligence who has entered this highway by obedience to the Gospel, will have no cause for being unsteady or uncertain about how he should walk. The reason for such a conclusion may be seen in a part of

the definition quoted of the word *highway* in the beginning of this paragraph. Let the student look again at that place and he will find the words "make plain" in the definition. In attempting to quote this famous passage many people add the words "need not err." The text does not directly contain such an expression, but the sense of the connection would justify its use. But while the above remarks are true, this is a prophecy pertaining to the personal life to be followed in the New Testament period. It will therefore be proper to add a few statements in view of that document. The things necessary to please God are clearly revealed so that no cause exists for being puzzled or confused as to one's duty. However, that does not mean that he can be inattentive and stumble along and expect to keep in the right pathway without giving any serious consideration to the subject. That is why Paul in Eph. 5: 15 instructs Christians to "walk circumspectly," which means to "watch your step" to use a familiar precautionary warning. If a man of ordinary intelligence will use that degree of care that he is able to use, there will be no reason for him to go astray in the manner of his life service for Christ.

Verse 9. Lions and other ravenous beasts are dangerous and otherwise undesirable in the material world. They are used to illustrate (by contrast) the safe and peaceable characters of those who are to travel upon this way of holiness. It is true that such wild creatures as lions will exist near the pathway, lurking near it to grasp any who might be so careless as to step aside from "the good and the right way;" yes, even the worst of all lions, the devil (1 Pe. 5: 8), will be dangerously near, and the travelers on the highroad of truth are warned to be always on their guard, watching their every step lest they slip. But they have the assurance that if they will thus watch and always "walk in the light," no harm can come to them. (Rom. 8: 31; 1 Jn. 1: 7.) *The redeemed* are the ones referred to as "those" in the preceding verse.

Verse 10. *The ransomed* are the ones who will have been redeemed and made ready to travel on the pathway of holiness. *Shall return* denotes those who had been walking in the ways of the world but who left that manner of life and came back to the Lord who had redeemed them with his blood. *Zion* literally speaking was

the most important part of Jerusalem, the capital of fleshly Israel. But it was the place from where the Gospel was first preached (Luke 24: 47), and the place at which the church first was spoken of as being in existence (Acts 2: 47). Because of all this the word Zion came to be used as a figurative designation for the church of Christ (Heb. 12: 22, 23). *Songs* would be a part of the exercises of those who were to be travelers on the highway of holiness (Eph. 5: 19; Col. 3: 16; Jas. 5: 13). *Sorrow and sighing shall flee away* does not mean that Christians are to have no unpleasant experiences while in the world for they will. But they will be enabled to find joy even in their troubles and comfort in their griefs (Matt. 5: 4; Jas. 1: 2, 3).

### ISAIAH 36

Verse 1. *Now it came to pass*. These words introduce a change in the subject matter of this book where it seems that Isaiah turns historian. However, the works of reference that I have consulted seem a little undecided as to whether Isaiah actually wrote these chapters, or that they were added to his book by those who had charge of compiling the Old Testament. In either case the validity of it would not be affected. Since the passage as a whole is almost verbatim like that in the history proper, I shall refer to my comments on it in the second volume of this Commentary. See the verses from 2 Ki. 18: 13 through 20: 19. That will save much space and will take care of all the chapters in the book of Isaiah through chapter 39. That period of the history covers the time when the Assyrian Empire was threatening the kingdom of Judah, having just successfully taken the 10 tribes off into captivity. It was fitting to insert those chapters at this place, if at all, because it was the interim between the downfall of the 10 tribes and the heavy predictions of the fall of Judah which was to come next against God's people. Thus I again insist that the readers go back to that place in the history and see the chapters with my comments thereon.

### ISAIAH 40

Verse 1. We have quite a diversion from the usual procedure since starting in this book. The main thread of thought will now be resumed, and we should expect to find many predictions concerning the captivity of

the kingdom of Judah and its return to the home land. Furthermore, there will be frequent instances where the prophet will see into the time of Christ. When the triumph of ancient Israel over her national foes is the subject of the prophet's writing, it might well be expected that he would see some comparison to the grand victory of Christ over all foes in that he was to be able to build his church amid the ruins of all the powers in the world, both religious and political. But for the present verse let us see the attention given to ancient Israel. It promises comfort for the people of God who were destined to go into captivity as a punishment for their sin of idolatry.

Verse 2. *Comfortably* means "to the heart" as if the prophet was told to have a heart to heart talk with the people of God. *Warfare* is a figurative reference to the period spent under Babylonian domination because that event was accomplished by the use of a large army. *Is accomplished* is present tense in grammatical form but is a prophecy then still over a century in the future. But we have already seen that it is according to the prophet's style to speak of future facts in the past tense because with the Lord the future is as well known as the present or past. *Her iniquity is pardoned* means the people of God will have been punished sufficiently for the sin of idolatry. *Double* is from *KEPHUL* which Strong defines, "a duplicate." Hence it does not mean that God punished his people twice as much as their sins called for. It means the punishment was on a par with or equal to the enormity of the sins. The verse is a prophecy of the return from the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 3. This and some following verses prophesy the work of John the Baptist. (See Matt. 3: 3.) John's work was in preparation for the coming of Christ. The Jews had been the nation of God for fifteen hundred years, and that had been promised to Abraham over six hundred years before the nation was formed at Sinai. In spite of the care the Lord had bestowed upon that people, they had departed from the teaching of the law and had become corrupt in their lives. Now it was necessary for someone to call upon them to make a personal reformation in life and thus form a special group who would be ready in life and character to become the material from which the Messiah could

select his first workers. This preparation was to be accomplished through repentance and baptism. (See Matt. 3: 11; Acts 13: 24.) The last part of our verse has reference to this work of reformation.

Verse 4. *Valley and mountain* are used figuratively, meaning that all extremes of character were to be adjusted to the requirements of the preaching of John. Those who were low in sin were to be lifted up and their feet be placed on higher ground. Those who were perched upon the mountains of pride and hypocrisy were to be made humble by the teaching proclaimed to them. The other terms of the verse are also figurative and simply mean that all conditions among the Jews were to be made conformed to the teaching of the great Harbinger.

Verse 5. It is reasonable to locate this verse with the work of John, although it is more general in its expressions. But it certainly was true that the work of John caused the glory of the Lord to be exalted. *The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it* means that the preaching of John was by inspiration of God and that would leave no doubt that it would be fulfilled.

Verse 6. The preaching of John was for the special purpose of preparing a people for Christ who was soon to appear among the Jews in Palestine. The definite requirement was that the hearers repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. However, that preaching included many important truths concerning man and his life on this earth. Hence, in the spirit of inquiry, the forerunner of Christ asked for a general subject on which to address those who came out to hear him. He was told to preach of the uncertainty of human existence, and to compare it to the life of grass and other things in the vegetable world. We know this was to have a general application, for Peter quotes it almost verbatim (1 Pe. 1: 24, 25), and applies it to man in general.

Verse 7. The subject is continued as to the uncertainty of human life, also its helplessness when the might of the Lord is turned loose upon it. Such will be the case when the divine law is rejected, for the Lord will cause all the vain purposes of man to wither as surely as the winds of summer heat will blast the growing grass.

Verse 8. In contrast with the fickleness of fleshly existence, the word of God is said to be enduring, even unto the age unending. On this basis the preacher in the wilderness exhorted the people to accept the Lord's word and reform their lives.

Verse 9. See the comments at ch. 35: 10 on the meaning of *Zion*. The *good tidings* that was to come out of Zion was the Gospel and it was preceded by the preaching of John. *Get thee up unto the high mountain* is a prediction that Zion was to become an exalted kingdom, because mountains in symbolic language means governments or kingdoms. Jerusalem was the general city in which Zion was the most prominent spot. *Say unto the cities of Judah* signified that the Jewish nation was called upon to look unto Jerusalem instead of Sinai as the source of the new law. (ch. 2: 3; Luke 24: 47.)

Verse 10. *Lord God will come* is a phrase that may be applied to more than one event, but it here had special reference to the coming of Christ to take over his kingdom (Matt. 16: 28). *His reward is with him* means the reward that Jesus was to receive for his victory over the grave. That contest and his triumph over death and hell won for him the right to become a king over his own kingdom which is the church. This was the subject of the conversation between Christ and Peter in Matt. 16: 18, 19.

Verse 11. Christ was not only to be a king, but also a shepherd over his flock and John was preparing that flock for him (John 1: 11, 12; 10: 1-5). But while the first application of this prediction was to the flock (or fold) that John prearranged for Jesus, it was also true that Jesus was to be shepherd over all people who would become the sheep of his pasture (1 Pe. 5: 4).

Verse 12. Idolatry was the chief sin of the Jewish nation, and it caused its people to disobey the laws of God, prominent among which was the one requiring a rest for the land every 7th year. As a punishment for their sins the people were to go away into captivity and that event is predicted all through this book. In keeping with the subject, the greatness of God's power and knowledge over that of the idol gods is also discussed by the prophet on behalf of the true God. Such is the theme of this and several following verses. *Who hath measured*



*the waters* means who but God could have done such a wonderful work? *Span* is defined, "the spread of the fingers," as if God is so great that just by a motion of his fingers he can decide the limits of the heavens. *Comprehended the dust* means God can account for every grain of dust that it on the earth. *Weigh the mountains* indicates that God knew how to arrange the balancing of the mountains so they would not interfere with the regular rotation of the earth about its axis.

Verse 13. If the Lord had such a wise and powerful control over the whole creation, what human being would be so foolish as to think of being able to direct Him? Man does not even know what is in the mind of the Lord, much less is able to give him any instructions about his wonderful works in the universe.

Verse 14. This verse is a continuation of the idea expressed in the preceding verses. It all is a challenge to the wisdom of man to consider the wisdom of God.

Verse 15. The insignificance of the nations as compared to God is likened to a drop of water in a bucket. The weight of their importance is compared to a grain of dust placed in a balance or "a pair of scales." On the same principle God can lift the *isles*, spots of land containing inhabitants, as if they weighed very little.

Verse 16. For the purpose of comparison a reference is made to the trees of Lebanon as fuel. Though such forestry was regarded as great and important, yet all of its growth would be insufficient to supply the just demands of the Lord. And if all of the animals that roamed the hills of that noted region were sacrificed to the Lord, they would not constitute a service equal to the deserts of the Almighty.

Verse 17. This verse is a general summing up of the comparisons just made in several preceding verses. The conclusion is that the nations of men are as nothing when compared with God, either in power or authority or dignity.

Verse 18. The greatness of God has been the subject of the prophet for a number of verses, describing it in direct contrast with other things that are really of much importance. He now issues the question based on the foregoing comparisons.

Verse 19. Of course no direct an-

swer was expected from the idolatrous people because their own sense would tell them that any attempt to reply would condemn their own inconsistencies. The prophet, therefore, will give his own description of the foolish pretensions of idolaters. One man will make a casting of some kind of metal and then shape it up with an engraving tool. After that another workman will ornament the image with a plating of gold. Then, as if the image might escape or be taken away, another workman will make silver chains to hold it.

Verse 20. God does not require any more from a man than he is able to give. If he is so poor that he cannot furnish an *oblation* (a present), he is excused without doing anything to take the place of the present. But the idolatrous persons are so foolish as to become interested in a god of their own production, since such an image would not be able to make any formal demands. Such an impoverished man will select a durable kind of tree and carve for himself an idol out of the wood. Or perhaps he can secure another workman who will make a metal or stone idol that will be stationary. This is the best that idolatry can do, yet how weak and foolish it is! The inconsistency of turning to an inanimate object like a tree after rejecting the true God is treated at greater length in ch. 44: 13-17.

Verse 21. This verse is a general call to attention. A look at the many evidences in nature would teach these idolaters the folly of their lives. Paul deals with this thought in Rom. 1: 19, 20. None of these works in creation of an inanimate kind have ever been known to reproduce their kind, or to bring into existence any other kind of object, hence their utter weakness should have been apparent to these idolaters.

Verse 22. Verses 19-21 should be considered rather as an inserted passage, or a break into the discussion of the greatness of the true God. Verse 18 called attention to Him by asking some questions regarding possible comparisons, and implying that nothing could truly be compared to such a great Being. Then after the verses on the foolishness of idolatry, the prophet resumes his remarks about the One of whom he had asked the questions in verse 18. He adds emphasis to the questions by stating some facts that specify the boundless might of Jehovah. Combining the in-

quity in verse 18 with our present verse, it is as if the prophet had written, "To whom then will ye liken God? I mean he that sitteth on the circle of the earth," etc. *Circle* is from *CHUG* which Strong defines, "a circle." It is the word for "compass" in Prov. 8: 27 where we know Solomon was writing about the bosom of the sea. These expressions show that the writers of the Bible understood the earth to be round and they were written hundreds of years before "scientists" thought they had made the discovery. In comparison with such a Being the inhabitants of the earth are as insignificant as grasshoppers. The *heavens* means the sky, and its appearance is that of a curtain or tent. This comparison of the sky to a tent also corresponds with the circular form of the earth.

Verse 23. God has as great a control over the rulers among men as he does over the things of creation. Pharaoh, Balak, Ahab, Jeroboam, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar and many others were made to feel the strong arm of Jehovah against their evil designs.

Verse 24. The great men who exalted themselves in their unrighteous intentions were to be disappointed. Their failure was illustrated by figures of speech drawn from plants in the vegetable world. Such is the application that should be made of the phrases *not be planted, not be sown, not take root. Wind shall blow upon them* is like the withering of a weakened plant by the blast of a dry wind.

Verse 25. Once more the Lord challenges his enemies to name something to which they could compare him.

Verse 26. No comparison can be made and the Lord again refers his enemies to the great works of creation. He specifically cites the stars or *host* of heaven and demands of his enemies that they account for them. It was said that Napoleon overheard some critics once ridiculing the idea of there being any God. Interrupting their conversation, Napoleon pointed to the myriads of stars overhead and asked, "Who made all of those?" The silence of humiliation was all the answer the former monarch received to his question. *By number* means that God can account for each star in the universe. Jesus used the word in the same sense when he said that the hairs on a man's head were all numbered (Matt. 10: 30). The last word

is from *SHAM* and Strong defines it, "An appellation [name], as a mark or memorial of individuality." The idea is that God made and continues to recognize each star as completely as if it were the only one.

Verse 27. The greatness of God over all idols has been the subject for several verses. It might be wondered why this verse seems to single out the people of Israel in the criticizing question. It is because they had been so guilty in going off after the heathen nations in the practices of idolatry. That was the reason why the 10 tribes had been given over to the captivity under the Assyrian Empire, and the 2 tribes (kingdom of Judah) was destined to go away under the Babylonian Empire before long. The people of God had become careless and felt secure in their corruptions as if they were not known to the Lord. That is why this verse represents them as saying their *way is hid from the Lord*.

Verse 28. This verse is the prophet's expressions of praise for the greatness of the God of Israel. He reminds the people of what they never should have forgotten, that God is everlasting and that he created all things. *No searching* means that no man is able fully to comprehend the understanding of the Lord, though it is expected that all should learn as much as they can about the divine wisdom.

Verse 29. God is a helper for those who are in need, and will give strength to the weak who are worthy. But he will not bestow such favors on those who do not manifest the proper regard for the blessing. (See Jas. 4: 6.)

Verse 30. Young people naturally are stronger than others and can withstand more trials. However, even they will faint and utterly fall if they do not respect the wisdom and might of God.

Verse 31. *Wait upon the Lord* means to rely upon him and do his bidding. *Renew their strength* means they will increase in the strength of the Lord. *Mount up* means they will be elevated by the Lord with just exaltation. (See Matt. 23: 12.) They *shall run* or exercise themselves in the service of the Lord and will be able to hold out to the end of the race through the assistance coming from the divine source.

### ISAIAH 41

Verse 1. The Lord used human agencies to carry out his plans. Sometimes the nations or persons would be

a desirable kind in their natural disposition and at others they would be objectionable. It would depend on the nature of the event predicted as to which kind of agency the Lord would choose. However, regardless of the character of the agency employed in any case, the Lord's purpose was always righteous. The outstanding events predicted by Isaiah as pertaining to the Old Testament period were the captivity of the Jews to punish them for their idolatry, and then their release from the captivity and return to their own land. To accomplish these purposes the Lord used various nations: the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians. In the grand scheme thus formed, some of these nations were used to chastise others for their own unrighteous motives even when they outwardly were performing the will of the Lord. This chapter deals with the events connected with the release of Israel from captivity in Babylon. To accomplish that purpose it was necessary to overthrow the Babylonian Empire, and the agency in God's hands for that work was the Medo-Persian Empire, led by the noted Cyrus. This verse opens up the subject by a call to attention of the people of the earth to the mighty plans of the Almighty. *Islands* is from a Hebrew word that Strong defines, "A habitable spot." It calls upon all people to consider what is about to be accomplished on behalf of the Jewish nation who will have been in bondage under the Babylonians for 70 years. The things about to be predicted will be for the benefit of God's afflicted people. In order to accomplish that, another nation will be given the power to act against the oppressor, and in so doing the people of the Lord will be given a "new birth of freedom," predicted in the words *let the people renew their strength. Let us come near* indicates the spirit of co-operation that will be shown by all parties concerned in the overthrow of the wicked Babylonians, and the release of the oppressed Jews.

Verse 2. For a few verses the prophet speaks for God and centers the attention of mankind upon the One who decreed to bring about the great events soon to come. *The righteous man from the east* means Cyrus, who was destined to lead the forces of Persia against the Babylonians and release the Jews from captivity. The sentences of this whole verse predict the success of Cyrus over the sur-

rounding kings, and his final victory over the mighty empire of the Babylonians.

Verse 3. This is past tense in form as I have previously explained it to be a style of prophetic speech. *He pursued them* means Cyrus pursued the kings and safely overcame them. *Way he had not gone before* denotes his success was in new fields.

Verse 4. Once more the question is asked as to who caused all these things to take place among the heathen kings and nations. Then the answer comes from the Being himself. *First and last* is a figurative way of saying that the Lord is all and in all. It is like the declaration made of Christ in Rev. 1: 11.

Verse 5. *Isles* is from EE which Strong defines, "properly a habitable spot (as desirable); dry coast, an island." It means that the inhabitants of all the civilized countries will know about the success of Cyrus and will be *afraid*. That means they will have respect for his work and will give it the deserved attention.

Verse 6. Because of the respect that people will have for Cyrus and his work on behalf of God's nation, they will co-operate and encourage each other in the procedure. See the fulfillment of this prophecy in Ezra 1: 5, 6. That passage shows that the Jews responded to the invitation of Cyrus, and also that the people around them joined in the good work by furnishing animals and materials for the program.

Verse 7. The actions described in this verse took place literally, in all probability, as the work of rebuilding proceeded in Jerusalem after the captivity was ended. But the passage may also be considered as a true picture of the harmonious work of the various forces that responded to the call of Cyrus. The fuller view of the subject will be had by reading the entire books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Verse 8. This verse gives us the reason why the Lord took such an active interest in the affairs of nations. It was for the sake of his people Israel who had descended from Abraham through Jacob. He punished them for their sins to bring them to repentance, but it was because of his great love for them that he did so.

Verse 9. This verse was true in both general and specific senses. Abraham was called out of Mesopotamia and the

Israelites were taken out of Egypt. Now the prediction was made that they would be taken out from their captivity in Babylon. In all of God's severe chastisements of his people, he kept them near his heart and did not cast *thee* away according to the final declaration of this verse.

Verse 10. Many of the expressions concerning Israel are general and refer to the care that God always had for his people. This verse, however, may truly be understood to have special reference to the release of Israel from captivity and their return to the home land. *Right hand of my righteousness* means that what is done by the hand of the Lord is right.

Verse 11. The events treated of in the prophetic writings are not always chronological as to order and dates of their occurrences. For instance, the preceding verse predicts the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, and the present verse predicts the overthrow of Babylon which was to take place before the return of the Jews. However, the manner of presenting these events is logical, for after telling us of the great deliverance of Israel, it was fitting to explain how such a revolutionary happening could take place, that it was through the downfall of Babylon; that is the subject of this and the following verse. The special feature of the subject predicted in this verse is the complete defeat of the Babylonian Empire.

Verse 12. This verse considers the completeness of the ruin of Babylon in that after the empire has been overthrown there will be no trace of its capital remaining. Such is the significance of the words *shalt not find them and as a thing of nought*. For the historical confirmation of the prediction see the quotation at ch. 13: 1.

Verse 13. The pronouns *thy* and *thee* refer to Israel and the verse is a promise from the Lord to help them and give them strength to resist their enemies.

Verse 14. *Worm* is used in the sense of the weak and lowly condition of the descendants of Jacob because of their situation in captivity. In spite of their low estate, the Lord will defend them and lift them out of the mire.

Verse 15. *Instrument* is not in the original as a separate word, but the Hebrew word for *threshing* means a sledge or hammer with which grain

that is piled on the barn floor could be beaten out for threshing. The figure is used to illustrate the success of God's people over the *mountains* (governments), and they were to have this success by the help of their God.

Verse 16. The figure of a threshing process is still the subject used for illustrative purposes. The power of God's people over others is the thing illustrated.

Verse 17. Previous to the captivity, the rich men and other leaders among the Jewish nation had been taking advantage of the poor and had deprived them of the things necessary for their comfort. All that was to be changed after the return from captivity. When the poor and needy seek for comforts the Lord will supply them.

Verse 18. These contrasting terms in nature are used to make further comparisons of the bountiful provisions that God promised to make for his oppressed people.

Verse 19. There is no historical account of any literal planting of trees as described in this verse. The whole passage is figurative and is intended to give a picture of the good fortune to come to Israel after coming back from exile.

Verse 20. By producing what would seem to have been the impossible, the Lord will prove to the nations his power and superiority of wisdom over all the gods.

Verse 21. This verse is a challenge for all peoples to compete with the power and understanding of the God of Israel.

Verse 22. It would come with poor grace for any god or nation to boast of what it will do in the future if it had nothing great in the past to show. Hence they are here demanded to *show the former things*. All history would put them to shameful silence were they to attempt any such claim.

Verse 23. The challenge continues on the basis of the past. What evidence in the past would prove the power of the heathen gods. The Lord is even willing that the gods of the heathen should perform any evil transaction that would prove their claims upon the fear or respect of man.

Verse 24. The challenging is over and the Lord comes directly to the conclusion that the heathen nations and their gods are nothing. He pro-



poses to show this to be the case by bringing them under shameful defeat. Yea, the gods of the Babylonians were to be overthrown and that event was to take place on the night of Belshazzar's feast at which time they "praised the gods of gold and silver" (Dan. 5: 4).

Verse 25. *I have raised* is the prophet's way of saying "I will have raised." It is a prediction of the rise of Cyrus. As he was actually east of Babylon that direction of the compass is used literally. Then he is said to be from the north because the kings and armies from the Mesopotamian region always came into Palestine from the north. (See the note at ch. 14: 31.) The power of Cyrus over the great men of Babylon was to be as sure as that of a workman over clay or building material.

Verse 26. The questions are again in the nature of a challenge to the people of the world to account for the ability to look into the future. The Lord is the only one who has that power, therefore none of the heathen nations were able to resist the decrees announced by the God of Israel.

Verse 27. *Will give to Jerusalem one* is a prophecy of Cyrus. His services were to be used for the benefit of the capital city of the Jews. *Bringeth good tidings* refers to the announcement that Cyrus made concerning the restoration of Jerusalem. This announcement may be read in Ezra 1: 2-4.

Verse 28. The weakness of the nations in the affairs of the future is the thought in this verse. There was no one among them who could show any knowledge of the future or of a choice of person to carry out the Lord's plan concerning Jerusalem.

Verse 29. The prophet makes a final thrust at idolatry. It was the cause of Israel's downfall, but that event was soon to be reversed and the power of the heathen gods will be shown to be vain.

## ISAIAH 42

Verse 1. Almost the entire previous chapter was devoted to the calling and work of Cyrus to be the deliverer of Israel from the Babylonian captivity. Much space is yet to be given to the captivity and the return of the Jews to their own land. However, it has been observed that Isaiah often combines his predictions concerning an-

cient Israel with those of spiritual Israel. Thus we may expect him to intersperse his writings with glimpses of the latter subject. We have such an instance of it in the present verse and it is continued for several more. But to be more specific, perhaps we should regard this passage as bearing on the personal character and work of Christ, who was destined to be the leader of spiritual Israel. We know the present verse had reference to Christ, for it is so applied in Matt. 12: 18-20. The pronoun *my* refers to God and the *servant* means Christ. The *Gentiles* are mentioned because the kingdom of Christ was to be open to Jews and Gentiles alike.

Verse 2. This predicts the mild conduct of Christ. He was not to be a noisy or boisterous speaker, but was to be a modest, retiring person.

Verse 3. A *reed* was the hollow stem of a tender plant. *Bruised* is from a word that means cracked, and *break* means to crush. The gentleness of Jesus was illustrated in this way. He would not be so rough as to crush a reed that was already cracked. *Smoking* is from כֶּהֱהָ which Strong defines, "feeble, obscure." *Flax* is from פִּשְׁתָּאִן and Strong's definition is, "flax; by implication a wick." The clause means that Jesus was to be so undisturbing in his manner of life that even a dimly burning wick would not be snuffed out by his movements near it. *Judgment* is from an original that means a verdict or sentence or conclusion. Jesus was to go about his work quietly and without boisterous pretense, yet his teaching would be firm and his declarations all were to be according to truth.

Verse 4. Jesus was to continue his public teaching unafraid of all of his adversaries. (See all this set forth in Matt. 23.) He would go on in his work until he will have completed the task for which he came into the world. The record of his life shows that he did the very thing that Isaiah here predicted. (John 17: 4.) The *isles* (inhabited spots) were to *wait for* (rely upon) his teaching. (See Mark 12: 37.)

Verse 5. *God* and *Lord* are used in their distinctive senses. (See the comments at Ps. 86: 12.) Both terms apply to the same Being and his great works are mentioned in this verse. The *heavens* means the sky around the earth that has the appearance of a tent spread out. The earth was created

to be under the heavens as a dwelling place for certain things coming from it. There is very little difference between the originals for *breath* and *spirit* as used in this place. What little there is may be expressed by saying the first indicates a being that has life, the second that the living being may have an intellect.

Verse 6. *I the Lord* is the Father and *thee* is Christ whom the Lord called, and the call was a righteous one. God promised to hold up his Son so that he could perform the work for which he was to be called. Through Christ the new covenant was to be given to the people (Heb. 8: 10). The work of Christ was for the benefit of the Gentiles, not for the Jews only as was the Mosaic covenant.

Verse 7. The terms of this verse are figurative and refer to men who are blind spiritually. The *prison house* is the state of sin in which all people are living until they are turned to Christ. Paul taught that if a man serves a life of sin he is a prisoner to that kind of life (Rom. 6: 16-18).

Verse 8. The importance and significance of the sacred name is shown in detail at Psa. 86: 12. He is jealous of his honor and will not tolerate any competition from other gods. This was taught the Israelites when they received the tables of the covenant at Sinai (Ex. 20: 5). And the same truth is taught by the apostle Paul in Eph. 3: 21. The ancient Israelite nation ignored this teaching and went off after strange gods. As a punishment for this grave error they were destined to spend 70 years in captivity in a foreign land. Likewise, if the professed Israelite of God under the Christian Dispensation disregards the glory of the church, they will suffer for it.

Verse 9. This verse virtually covers the same thought as expressed in the preceding one. The thought is set forth in the words *former things* and *new things*. In other words, the history of the past should have shown the people that the Lord is always displeased when his people try to mix the divine worship with the human. On that basis the prediction was made that future generations would suffer the chastisement of God if they were untrue to Him.

Verse 10. From this verse through 17 the passage may be considered a prediction of the return from the captivity, with some reference to the im-

proved condition that will have come upon the Israelite nation as a result of their period of chastisement. To *sing a new song* means to sing again a song of praise to the Lord for his wonderful blessing in releasing his people from the bondage. All people were to be informed of the gracious deliverance that the Lord will have brought to his oppressed nation.

Verse 11. Various localities are named in order to set forth the general knowledge that will be given of the great blessings bestowed upon the nation that was sent into exile for its sins. *Kedar* was one of the tribes of Arabs who descended from Ishmael. They are singled out here because of their prominence among the enemy nations. This prediction was to remind them that the God of Israel had not forgotten his beloved people, and intended to bring for them a strong revenge for the oppression that the heathen nations had imposed upon them.

Verse 12. *Islands* means the spots or regions that were inhabited. They will be called upon to recognize the greatness of the God of the descendants of Jacob.

Verse 13. This verse is a direct reference to the works of God in overcoming the enemies of his people. Of course it was to be accomplished through the agency of another nation (the Medes and Persians), but it was to be the work of the Lord in reality. God designates himself as a *man of war* because the great deliverance of his people from their bondage will be accomplished through military activities. (See the historical quotation at ch. 13: 7, 8.) *Stir up jealousy* is another reference to the declaration in Ex. 20: 5. It was because of their idolatry that God sent his people into captivity, and then the same jealousy was to stir him up against the idolatrous nation that had been used to chastise the disobedient children.

Verse 14. God had been longsuffering with his own people before he sent them off into exile. Then he was going to be patient with the heathen nations that were to be used as agencies in punishing his disobedient nation. But the time of waiting will be over when the date for the fulfillment of this prophecy comes due. *Will destroy and devour* is a prediction of the complete overthrow of Babylon. The Biblical account of this fulfillment is in Dan. 5. For the historical confir-

mation see the quotation in connection with the comments on ch. 13: 1.

Verse 15. The reversal of desirable conditions in nature to those undesirable illustrates the calamity that was to come on the heathen country. It had oppressed the people of God, and in turn it was to feel the sting of God's rebuke. The geographical terms of the verse are used figuratively.

Verse 16. The preceding verse was against the Babylonian Empire because it had been the oppressor of Israel. This verse is in favor of the people of God and the terms are also used figuratively. The favor of conducting the blind over a way they had never seen is used to compare the great road to freedom that the Jews had not seen and that appeared to be impossible previously. The *darkness* of their captivity will be penetrated by the *light* of their release from bondage. *Crooked* is from *MAAQASH* which Strong defines, "a crook (in a road)." Such a road would be unpleasant and difficult to travel, and such is compared to the difficult life the people of God were to experience while in captivity. Their release from that bondage was to remove all such difficulties, and open before them a straight and just pathway of living. This prediction was made for the consolation of the people of the Lord who were destined to go through a long and bitter trial.

Verse 17. The special effect the captivity was to have on the Israelites was to cure them of idolatrous tendencies and practices. It was true that after that experience in their lives they never did again practice the corrupt service. They not only ceased the active practice of it, but were so turned against it that they abhorred it as is predicted in this verse in the words *be ashamed that trust in graven images*. There is a lengthy quotation from history on this subject which is in connection with comments on ch. 1: 25. This is very interesting as well as important, and I shall insist that the reader take the time and have the patience to read carefully that place.

Verse 18. *Deaf* and *blind* were those among the leaders of the nation who had refused to hear the word of the Lord and who refused to see the folly of their own sins.

Verse 19. The figurative sense of the language is discussed in this verse. The very person whom the Lord had counted on to carry out his

will was the one meant. *Perfect* is from *SHALAM* which Strong defines, "a primitive root; to be safe (in mind, body or estate)." The thought is of one who is self-satisfied that he does not see the dangers that threaten him. That is why this servant is charged with being blind.

Verse 20. This verse brings out more clearly the figurative sense of the blindness charged against the servant of God. He was not literally blind because it says that he was *seeing many things*. The explanation is in the next phrase *observe not*. That word is from *SHAMAR* and the part of Strong's definition that applies here is, "attend to." In the King James translation of the Bible the word has been rendered by beware, be circumspect, take heed, mark, look narrowly, regard and watch. With the literal and figurative sense of the word in mind, it is easy to understand the several passages in the Bible that speak of people as seeing and yet not seeing. (Psa. 69: 23; 115: 5; 135: 16; Isa. 44: 18; Jer. 5: 21; Ezek. 12: 2; Matt. 13: 13; Mark 4: 12; 8: 18; John 9: 39-41; Acts 28: 26, 27; Rom. 11: 8, 10.) It recalls an old saying that "no one is so blind as the man who will not see." On the same principle this verse also would regard the man as deaf because he refused to hear.

Verse 21. The Lord was not disappointed over his own purposes. The failure of man to do his best was to be expected and such was the meaning of the prediction. The law of the Lord is righteous regardless of whether it is disobeyed or not. When the shortcomings of man are punished, such as inflicting the 70-year captivity, it really does honor to the law and magnifies its authority. Similar principles are taught by Paul in Rom. 3: 3-7 and 2 Cor. 2: 15, 16.

Verse 22. From this verse to the close of the chapter is a prediction of the captivity. *Robbed and spoiled* means the Israelites were made to lose their possessions (2 Ki. 24: 13). *Snared in holes* is a figurative picture of the undone condition the nation was to be in by the attacks of the Babylonians. The whole verse corresponds with the treatment accorded the nation when Jerusalem was attacked.

Verse 23. This verse is a call to attention for the warnings that the Lord intended bringing the punish-

ment on his people in the time to come.

Verse 24. *Jacob and Israel* are mentioned in this connection because the latter was the name once given to the father of the 12 tribes, and it in turn came to be a designation for the nation that came from him. The Lord affirms that he it was who was to give Israel over to the robbers (the Babylonians). The reason for it is also given, that it was because of their sins. They refused to walk obediently according to the law of their God. The specific law they violated was that against idolatry, which induced them to disregard the law of rest for the land every 7th year. That law was set forth in much detail in Lev. 25.

Verse 25. *Hath poured* is in the past tense in form but is a prophecy that was yet to be fulfilled. *Fury of his anger* refers to the jealousy the Lord has when his people betray him and turn to other gods. (Ex. 20: 5.) *Strength of battle* was fulfilled when the forces of Babylon came against Jerusalem. (2 Kl. 25.) *Yet he knew* not denotes that the nation of Israel did not realize what it was all about when their city was besieged and finally taken by storm of battle.

### ISAIAH 43

Verse 1. The present chapter and the following one will contain some lengthy brackets, generally on the return from the captivity. I suggest that the reader mark his Bible accordingly and make notation of the general subject, then consider the several verses as they are commented on in their order. The first bracket goes from the first verse through 21, and the subject as a whole is the return from captivity. *I have redeemed thee* is prophecy although sounding like history, and it means that God would rescue his people from Babylonian captivity. *Name* is from *sheem* and Strong's definition is, "a primitive word . . . an appellation [name], as a mark or memorial of individuality." The idea of the clause is that Israel had a distinctive place in the affections of the Lord and he was going to favor that distinction by calling them His and then bringing them out of their exile.

Verse 2. This verse is a special feature of the general promise for divine support in a time of trial. All of the terms, *water, rivers, fire and flames* that Israel will be able to survive, are used in a figurative sense. The

force of the passage is to the effect that Israel will be able to survive the test of the captivity and the rough treatment given them by the Babylonians. The promises in the verse have been woven into poetry and song for many years when authors wished to treat of the kindly Providence that attends the people of the Lord. The principles implied in the passage may truly be so used, but it really pertains to the ancient people in captivity.

Verse 3. *Egypt for thy ransom* could justly receive a general application, but it has special reference to the deliverance of Israel from that country in the time of Moses. It was appropriate to mention that fact in this place, because a similar situation was under consideration. The nation had once been in bondage to Egypt for several centuries when God brought them out into their freedom. Now that same nation was to be in captivity for 70 years and the Lord predicted they were to be released. Moreover, in freeing the nation from the grasp of Egypt, that country lost its king and hundreds of its choice men (Ex. 14). Likewise, the deliverance of Israel from Babylon was to be accomplished by the overthrow of that government. *Ethiopia and Seba* were districts in Africa and the passage has reference to the service that was received from them on behalf of Israel. (See Psa. 72: 10.)

Verse 4. This is more along the same line as the above. The fact of abandoning the nation to the enemy was not a sign that God ceased to love it. On the other hand, his love was the reason for his doing so and it was for the good of the nation. *Give men for thee* was fulfilled when the leaders of the Babylonian Empire were overthrown and forced to give up their hold on Israel. (Dan. 5.)

Verse 5. This bracket as a whole predicts the recall of the Jews from Babylonian captivity. But it should not be forgotten that God had people scattered over various parts of the world. The account in Jer. 43 may be noticed as an instance of it. Also, when a prophet is in the midst of a passage that started with a specific situation in mind, he often branches off into a more extended application of the things he started to write about. God always has been attentive to the needs of his people and seen to it that proper measures were taken to meet them. Since *east and west* are op-



posite terms, they are used to express the complete oversight of God for his own.

Verse 6. On the same principle that *east* and *west* were used in the preceding verse, the prophet uses *north* and *south* in this. The idea is to emphasize the thorough watchcare of the Lord over those he claims as his own servants.

Verse 7. The outstanding clause in this verse is, *I have created him for my glory*. The last word is defined in the lexicon as "splendor." This was not a selfish motive on the part of God. If the creation of man may add splendor to the Creator, then man must be a wonderful creature. How regretful it is, that he will often so conduct himself as to lose that splendid character, and become instead a shame upon his Maker. The object of the Lord in making man is the same thought expressed by Paul in Acts 17: 26, 27. Here is another thought for us to consider in this connection. God's purpose to have man as an ornament to the greatness of His own self accounts for the fact that he was made in the image of God. (Gen. 1: 26, 27.) This was not done for any other creature in all the earth.

Verse 8. On the two meanings of seeing and hearing, see the comments and references at ch. 42: 20. The present verse predicts that the people who had been in captivity because they had been blind and deaf spiritually, will have their eyes opened and their ears unstopped as a result of the captivity and its enlightening influences.

Verse 9. This verse is a challenge somewhat like that in ch. 41: 23, and the student will please read that place again, with the comments offered thereon. There was no literal gathering of nations for the purpose suggested here. It is like saying that the combined knowledge of the nations of the world would not be able to explain the great works of God. And neither could they produce any evidence that would justify their opposition to the God of Israel and their rough treatment of that nation.

Verse 10. God's people were his servants and were destined to witness the great events to be brought about by the power of the ruler of the universe. There was no god before the One who made all things that exist, neither will there ever be another. He is the self-existent One who has no beginning and will have no end.

Verse 11. This verse reaffirms the incomparable greatness of the Lord, then adds the quality of being a *saviour*. It is from a word that is defined, "to free or succor." The significance of the quality is in the fact that Israel was to be in captivity, and would need some friend strong enough to rescue them from their peril. The Lord God was to come to their rescue at the proper time and save them from bondage.

Verse 12. God went to the rescue of his people when they were in Egyptian bondage and was successful in delivering them. That was before they had begun to rely on heathen gods. This verse uses that fact as an argument that He is all-powerful and that strange gods are unnecessary.

Verse 13. The Israelites had their book that showed the account of the creation which they professed to believe. That volume sets forth that darkness was everywhere until God said, "Let there be light." Such is the meaning of the words *before the day was, I am he*. Surely, a creator who was in existence before there was any light and who caused the light to come, could be able to resist all enemies including the false gods and the nations that served them. God challengingly asks *who shall let it?* The word *let* is an old rendering of a word that means "hinder."

Verse 14. The prophet now comes directly to the subject on which he has been writing through most of the chapter, which is the deliverance of God's people from their oppressors. The Chaldeans were a special group of leading men in the old times and they finally got control of the Babylonian Empire. Because of that both terms came to be used interchangeably. *Cry is in the ships* is a reference to their navigation on the beautiful stream of the Euphrates. *Brought down* is a prediction of the defeat of their great men of the Chaldean origin. It was accomplished on the night of the famous feast of Belshazzar recorded in Dan. 5: 30.

Verse 15. The surety of the fulfillment of the prediction is indicated by the character of the source from which it was made. This verse is a condensed description of that great Being. *Lord* means self-existent; *Holy One* means he is altogether righteous; *creator of Israel* means He not only was the general source of things, but in a special sense was the originator

of the nation addressed; to be *King* means to be the ruler of all. With such an individual back of the promises and predictions they were bound to be fulfilled when the proper time has been reached.

Verse 16. God's power was proved when he opened a way through the Red Sea (Ex. 14), and a passage across the Jordan River (Josh. 3).

Verse 17. *Bringeth forth the chariot and horse.* As a simple statement of fact, this clause may be understood in both a favorable and unfavorable sense. In the former it could be applied where the Lord led the forces of war of a nation to carry out His plan. That took place when the armies of Assyria were used to punish the 10 tribes, and when those of Babylon were brought against Jerusalem. But the connection shows that it is used in this verse in the unfavorable sense. The forces of Babylon were to be led as by an arresting officer, and finally placed in the condition of ruin arranged for them. That was to take place when the Persians would be brought against Babylon. The result of that attack is predicted in the remainder of the verse. Not only was Babylon to be defeated in the attack, but the city was never to be rebuilt. Such is the meaning of *extinct* and *quenched as tow*. The historical fulfillment of this prophecy was quoted in connection with comments at ch. 13: 1.

Verse 18. *Remember ye not* is used as a stirring up of the memory. It is as if it said "Do you not remember the things that have happened?"

Verse 19. The words of this verse are used figuratively but apply to the release of Israel from captivity. That event had never taken place before, hence it would be a *new thing*. A pathway in the wilderness and a river in a desert would not only be a miracle, but would be one to cause much joy. The subject is used to compare the great favor of being freed from the desolation of the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 20. Dumb beasts cannot intentionally give honor to the Lord, but they can be so used that they fulfill the divine predictions, and in that manner they will do honor to God. That specific thing was to take place in Babylon after the Lord takes his people out of it to enjoy the *waters in the wilderness* and *rivers in the desert* (explained in the preceding

verse). This prediction is described in detail in ch. 13: 19-22, and the secular history that confirms it is quoted at verse one of that chapter.

Verse 21. In forming the nation of Israel for himself, the Lord was bestowing a greater favor upon them than he was taking upon himself. Therefore they should gladly have done what they could to bring praise unto Him.

Verse 22. From here to the end of the chapter should be included in one bracket and the subject is, "during the captivity." Most of the predictions which we have been studying were either before the event of the captivity, or the return to Palestine afterward. The present passage describes conditions and conduct of Israel while in the land of their captivity. The general theme is that while in that country the Israelites were not even permitted to worship the true God as they should have done in Palestine. Not only so, but they were to be required to participate in idolatrous practices in order that they might get an "overdose," so to speak, of the evil that had been their downfall. Of course these remarks should be understood as applying to the nation as a whole. There were certain individuals who had been true to the Lord who did not have to take part in these heathen services. Among them were Daniel and his three companions (Dan. 3: 12, 18, 27; 6: 10, 23). There is a long note explaining this feature of the subject in connection with 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this Commentary. Having seen these comments on the bracket as a whole, the reader will now give attention to those on the verses in their order. *Hast not called upon me, O Jacob* was because the Lord did not permit them to while in captivity. *Hast been weary* means to be tired of something. The Israelites were compelled to act as if they were worn out and not feeling like serving the Lord.

Verse 23. *Small cattle* is rendered "lambs or kids" in the margin which is correct. It indicates a young animal and that was the kind that the law of Moses required of the Jews. But while in the captivity such services were not permitted them. The *sacrifices* would include the larger beasts and other articles of value that the nation offered to God when they were in their own land. Even as small a service as the burning of in-

cense was not acceptable at the time of their stay in Babylon.

Verse 24. *Sweet cane* must be considered as one word and refers to some kind of hollow reed whose fibers were used for making paper. If a Jew wished to present such material for the use of the Lord's scribes, but could not produce it himself, he could buy some with his money and bring it to the headquarters. This service was not possible during the captivity and would not have been acceptable even if it had been possible. The fat (such as the suet) of their cattle always was to be brought to be burned on the altar of the Lord. That was discontinued while in the land of Babylon. *Serve with thy sins* means the only way the Jews served God while in captivity was by continuing in the sins that brought them into their state of bondage, and that consisted of the practices of idolatry. This was predicted so much in detail in an earlier scripture that I think it will be well to quote it, which is as follows: "The Lord shall bring thee and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone" (Deut. 28: 36). The Lord really was *wearied* or almost out of patience over their iniquities.

Verse 25. If the Israelites had been dealt with according to strict justice, they would have been utterly rejected; but instead, the Lord promised to forgive and redeem them. However, it was not to be as a reward for their religious activities in Babylon, for such sacrifices never could win the favor of God, even though he had forced them to practice such things. But that was as a corrective punishment upon them and not as an act "for the remission of sins." But this verse explains why the Lord was going to blot out their sins; it was for His own sake, for the honor of his name.

Verse 26. This verse is a challenge for the people to recall any reason if such existed, why the Lord should justify them on the basis of their own merit.

Verse 27. Beginning with the ancestors of their race and coming on down through the lives of their teachers, sin had been committed against the Lord.

Verse 28. *Therefore* is a conclusion that the Lord finally became weary

with the oft-repeated and continued transgressions, and hence the bitter experiences they were undergoing in the land of Babylon.

#### ISAIAH 44

Verse 1. This chapter may be divided into three quite lengthy brackets and each given a general subject. As the case usually is, certain verses in a bracket will have specific applications, yet all bearing some relation to the main topic by which the bracket was designated. It will always be well for the student to keep the main subject in mind while reading the comments on the several verses which will be considered in their order. The first bracket includes this verse through 8, and the subject is the return from Babylonian captivity. The first verse is a call from the Lord for his people to give attention to the word about to be spoken. *Jacob* and *Israel* now apply to the same group. The two names so used go back in history to the time when Jacob had his wrestling match with the angel (Gen. 32: 24-38), at which time he received the name *Israel*. After that the name came to be applied to the nation that descended from Jacob's 12 sons, so that *Jacob* and *Israel* mean the one people.

Verse 2. This verse is an assurance to the people of God that they need not be fearful of the outcome of the captivity. *Jesurun* (like *Jeshurun*) is from a Hebrew word which Strong defines, "upright; a symbolical name for Israel." Because of its descriptive significance, the word has been used a few times in the Bible to designate the ancient people of God. Since the Lord formed the nation he had a great interest in it and did not intend to let it perish.

Verse 3. These are figurative expressions to compare the help that God was promising to his people who will have been in captivity for 70 years.

Verse 4. Nothing could be more desirable than the results of refreshing moisture, and the subject is used to illustrate the turn of affairs in the Israelite nation.

Verse 5. It is human nature to desire a share in the good things of others. When the lot of Israel turns in their favor, many will want to be classed among that people. There is an outstanding instance of this recorded in Est. 8: 17. This item may

be regarded as a side glance of the favorable things that were to happen for Israel when their misfortunes were reversed and they again gained their freedom.

Verse 6. The completeness of the God of Israel is the principal thought in this verse. The title *King* is used because much respect had come to be paid to persons who had it in the affairs of the world. The king of Babylon had taken the Israelites off into captivity and ruled them by his iron power. It was very fitting, therefore, that Israel be reminded of the real King over them. He also called himself their *redeemer* because the subject immediately at hand is the rescue of Israel from the grasp of the heathen power. He also uses the phrase *Lord of hosts*, and the third word is from TSEBAAH. Strong's definition of the word is, "a mass of persons, especially a regiment organized for war (an army)." The Lord has power that is as great as that which can be manifested by all the soldiers in the world. *First and last* is a symbol of the entirety of His existence. Such passages as these were especially appropriate because of the central cause of Israel's downfall, and that was their service to the strange gods. They were to have learned the fundamental truth that beside God there is no other, and that all idols are void of any good.

Verse 7. The special feature of God's greatness that is emphasized in this verse is his endless existence. That fact was proved by his ability to appoint *ancient* people and also *things that are coming*. All others are challenged to show a like power.

Verse 8. On the basis of this might of Israel's God, they are given assurance of deliverance from their misfortunes. The declaration of the exclusiveness of the one true God needed to be repeated over and over again, because of the chief weakness of the nation for going after idols.

Verse 9. The subject matter changes and from this verse through 20 the prophet will describe that of idolatry, to show the weakness and foolishness of everything connected with it. Let the reader keep this general subject in mind as he follows the comments on the various verses of this bracket. The first charge the prophet makes against the formers of idols is that they are *vanity*. That word is from *rohuw* and Strong defines it, "to lie

waste; a desolation (of surface), i.e. desert; figuratively a worthless thing; adverbially in vain." This definition will show us that the charge is correct, for idolatry has nothing to offer mankind but disappointment. *Delectable* means desirable and such things are promised through the services to the true God that cannot be supplied by any idol. *Their own witness* means that the evidence of the uselessness of idols is proved by what can be observed of them, namely: they cannot see and therefore cannot know anything.

Verse 10. This verse is in the form of a derisive question as if it said, "Who would ever think of doing such a foolish thing as making an image that is good for nothing?" *Molten and graven* are two ways of making an image. The first means one that is cast and the other means to shape with an engraving tool.

Verse 11. When these men who make idols look at each other and then at their helpless idols, they should be ashamed of the whole situation. They should realize that they are but men themselves and have no superhuman power. Then how could they make any god that would have any more power than they possess themselves? It would seem that they would not have the face to even look at each other.

Verse 12. The work of making these idols is like any other labor of a blacksmith. About all that results from it is the physical exhaustion that comes to the smith, just the same as if he was making an article by which to cultivate the soil. And to think that after he gets the piece made, he will set it up in a corner and bow before it as if it were a god! The whole performance is thus described that all might see how ridiculous the subject of idolatry is.

Verse 13. If a man wanted to build a house in which he or some other human being intended to live, he would be expected to observe the rules and care described in this verse. A structure that is intended to house a human creature should be so built that it would be satisfactory both in appearance and comfort. All of this because man is the most important being under the skies and deserves the best. But here is a workman using the same care in forming an idol which is so inferior to man that it needs to be housed in the same place



where its maker lives. A god that is made by the kind of workman that can build a house for an earthly occupant could certainly not have any more power than its maker. So the inconsistency of idolaters is the main point in this verse.

Verse 14. *He strengtheneth* is rendered "taketh courage" in the margin, and the lexicon agrees with it. The thought is that the idolaters count on the use of the trees to make themselves a god that can help them. And yet these are but the plants of the forest that another power caused to exist. Even the ash or other tree that a man might plant must depend upon the rain that the true God causes to fall if it is to be able to live and grow. How foolish, then, to rely on the materials thus produced by the true God, to form man-made gods to worship in opposition to Him!

Verse 15. The weakness of idolatry continues to be the theme of the prophet which he demonstrates by the way its advocates mix it up with other things that are so common. For instance, the same material that is used for fire to warm by and cook man's food, is also used to make a god. *Graven image* means one that is shaped with a carving tool, whether it is metal or wood that is to be carved.

Verse 16. This is practically the same as the preceding verse except that perhaps the prophet tries to show up the inconsistencies of the idolaters a little more by a repetition of the acts in practice among them. Here is this idolater, using part of the same material from which he made his god, to cook his food and warm his body. And yet all the actual benefit he is able to derive from such a source is signified by his common and temporal enjoyment of the comforts of the body. The highest praise he has for this material from which his god is made is, *Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire*. It is almost juvenile in its sound.

Verse 17. *Residue* means the wood that is left after the meal has been cooked and a warming fire has been made. This wood is then used to form an idol before which the man will fall down and perform acts of worship. He is so foolish as to ask this wooden god of his own manufacture to deliver him. This word will be understood better by remembering that the whole passage is a prediction

of conditions that will wind up in Babylonian captivity. This idol-worshipping Jew will be so foolish as to call upon his man-made image to get him out of his bondage, and all that when he will know that it was the worship of such dumb idols that got him into his state of bondage.

Verse 18. God does not directly cause any man to do wrong, but he does often abandon a wicked man to his own evil desires, and in such a manner will shut his eyes.

Verse 19. This verse gives an explanation of how the eyes were closed as per the preceding verse. *None considereth* accounts for the blindness spoken of and lays the blame for it at the door of the individual himself. After a man has given himself up to such a senseless line of conduct he will become practically blind and deaf to his foolish acts and unreasonable remarks. Hence this idolater forgets all about what he did in cutting down the tree and making an image with part of the wood.

Verse 20. *Feedeth on ashes* is a figurative phrase to show how trivial the interests are of the kind of person being considered. He is completely duped and does not realize that his entire motive in life is false.

Verse 21. The general subject again changes. From this verse to the end of the chapter it will be the return from captivity, with certain predictions of how the event will be made possible. The agency of man and his earthly powers will be seen to be a part of the Lord's great scheme. *Jacob* and *Israel* are directly addressed in this verse because the Lord is concerned in their welfare. Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32: 28), and after that the two words were used together as referring to the same nation. The prophecy of the captivity and also the return from it has been the burden of the prophet's writing much of the time, and will continue to be so for much of the remainder of the book.

Verse 22. *Have blotted out* means that the period of the captivity will have satisfied the Lord's anger against the sin of idolatry committed by the nation. After that they were to be released from their bondage and permitted to return to their own land. *As a thick cloud* is a comparison for the completeness of God's mercy toward his people. A thick cloud would hide everything behind it, and the

mercy of the Lord was to hide the errors of the nation. *Have redeemed thee* is past tense in form but refers to the rescue of the nation from Babylonian captivity which was to take place at the proper time.

Verse 23. *Heavens, earth, mountains and forest* are used figuratively, and it means there should be general rejoicing over the redemption of God's people from the oppression that had been over them for so long.

Verse 24. The Lord frequently identifies himself in addressing the Jewish people and it is done in connection with the things he has accomplished. This is especially appropriate because of the outstanding weakness of the nation. They had forsaken the true God and gone after false ones, those that could do nothing. They could not even move themselves, much less perform any work upon others or in their behalf. God made the heavens and earth unaided by any other being.

Verse 25. The Lord not only can bring to pass his own purposes, but can oppose successfully those of others, which is the meaning of *frustrate*. *Tokens* means signs or omens held out as a prophecy that certain things were going to happen. God knows when these are false signs and exposes them. *Diviners* were people who pretended to foretell the future by some kind of magic or mysterious numbers. *Mad* is from HALAL and one part of Strong's definition is "to rave." When the wicked *diviners* would try to impose on the people, God would expose them which would cause them to rave with shame and disappointment.

Verse 26. God acts in an opposite manner toward the predictions of his own servants and prophets. He not only enables them to see and predict the future, but sees to it that the predictions are fulfilled. The particular event that was in the mind of the Lord, expressed by the prophet, was the restoration of Jerusalem so that God's people could inhabit it again. We should observe that we are still in the bracket that predicts the return from the captivity, and the rebuilding of the capital city would be connected with that affair. The rebuilding of Jerusalem is recorded in the book of Nehemiah.

Verse 27. This verse could truly be said in a general sense because of God's power over these works of creation. However, it has special refer-

ence to the overcoming of the Euphrates River which would have been a barrier to the entrance to Babylon had the great military general not used the proper strategy at the time.

Verse 28. This verse comes appropriately in connection with the preceding one since it was Cyrus who was to overcome the obstacle of the great river. He is here called the Lord's *shepherd* because a shepherd exercises a certain care for a flock. And that was truly to be a task placed upon him by the God of Israel. Since the next chapter opens with the same great person, and there are several predictions there concerning him and his work, I will not make further comments on it now.

### ISAIAH 45

Verse 1. One meaning of *anointed* is to be consecrated. God selected Cyrus as his agency for accomplishing the overthrow of Babylon and in that sense he consecrated or devoted him to that particular work. It had nothing to do with his personal character, although he was already a good man morally. *Right hand I have holden* means God would give Cyrus success in his work. *Loose the loins of kings* was fulfilled with Belshazzar (Dan. 5: 6). *Open the two leaved gates*. The wall about Babylon had gates or doors, as did the one that was built on the banks of the Euphrates River that ran through the city. In order to get to the king's position it was necessary to get through these gates. The details of that interesting event are quoted at length at ch. 13: 1, 7, 8. In reading that historical quotation I suggest that the student especially observe the part that fulfills the words *and the gates shall not be shut* which are a part of the prediction of the present verse.

Verse 2. *I will go before thee* means that God would be the force in reality that would make the activities of Cyrus successful. *Break in pieces* is figurative and means the gates would not be any hindrance to the entrance of Cyrus and his army into the city. *Gates of brass* are the same gates that are mentioned in the preceding verse, and the history shows they were made of that kind of metal, together with the iron that was used in the structure. It is remarkable to note the detail in which the prophet describes in advance this very important epoch in history. He refers to the very means by which Cyrus was to enter

the city, and also gives the name of the man who was to be God's agent in the transaction. It should also be remembered that this noted prophecy was made over a hundred years before it was fulfilled, thus proving the wisdom of the God of heaven who inspired Isaiah to write it.

Verse 3. This verse is a promise that Cyrus would get possession of the treasures that had been hoarded up in Babylon. The motive for making such a prediction in behalf of Cyrus and then fulfilling it upon him, was to prove to him it was the God of Israel whom he was serving in the great movement. Even the detail of putting his personal name down in the inspired prophecy was a link in the chain of divine evidences.

Verse 4. *Surname* is from KANAH and Strong's definition is, "a primitive root; to address by an additional name; hence, to eulogize." Thus we understand the statement does not refer to the name Cyrus for that was not an additional name, and it was the one commonly known to belong to him in his own day and that he had received independent of God. The mention of that name was merely a prediction of the inspired prophet which was one of the evidences that God was able to see into the future and enable his servants to foretell it. But God did eulogize and hence *sur-name* Cyrus in that he called him his *anointed* and said other favorable things about him. *Though thou hast not known me.* Cyrus was a good man morally, but he was a heathen in religion. The above clause means Cyrus unconsciously fulfilled the predictions of the inspired prophet. In other words, he was not called to this work on account of any previous devotion to or knowledge of the true God of Israel.

Verse 5. The language is still addressed to Cyrus and repeats the fundamental principle that there is only one true God. It is not enough to acknowledge the Lord God to be such, but he must be recognized as the only one. That would mean that all other gods are false and without any authority. To *gird* means to bind one's body so as to support it. God did this for Cyrus though he had never previously known Him. (See the comments on this point in the preceding verse.)

Verse 6. *That they may know* is an explanation of one of the reasons God

had for using a man who had not previously been his servant. It would prove to the witnesses that Cyrus was not performing his great deeds in return for some favors that had been shown him before; that it was purely because of some invisible power or influence that was being exerted upon him. And the final conclusion would be that *there is none beside me.* *Rising of the sun* is a reference to the East which is the opposite of the West. The clause means that people everywhere were to learn the great truths just stated, that the Lord of the Hebrews was the one and only true God.

Verse 7. Darkness is a negative condition and did not require any act to originate it but is the absence of light. (See Gen. 1: 2, 3.) This verse means that God has complete control over all nature, so that if he sees fit to make it dark at any time by suspending the presence of light he can do so. *Evil* is from RAH and in the King James version has also been rendered by adversity, affliction, calamity, distress, misery, grief and others, hence the word does not always mean something sinful. The phrase in our verse means that God is able to cause either peace or the opposite, depending on the deserts of the case. The lesson intended is that God is able to bring the predicted distress upon the Babylonians for which he will use Cyrus as his agent.

Verse 8. All of these figures of speech are used to indicate the universal tokens of God's great power and his boundless love for his creatures. *Bring forth salvation* means to ascribe salvation to God because he hath created all things that exist.

Verse 9. It is foolish for a man to strive with his maker, because it is evident that nothing can be as great as the power that brought it into existence. If a man is bound to compete with anyone, it should be with another person in his rank. That is the thought in the clause about the potsherd which is a piece of pottery. Such a worthless scrap would at least be consistent if it tried to array its strength against another such scrap. But it would be out of order if the clay, from which this piece of pottery had been formed, should criticize the potter and blame him for the broken condition of the scraps. Many a good vessel has been made by a wise potter, and afterward that vessel would be

broken through the carelessness of another.

Verse 10. The same argument as the preceding is continued in this verse. The illustration is drawn from a different subject, that of a parent and his child.

Verse 11. A God who is as great as the foregoing facts prove him to be, can foretell and direct the future in the interest of his children. *Ask me of things to come* is a form of speech that means God is able to tell the world what is going to happen. *Command ye me* is the same thought as the italicized words above. It is as if it said, "command or appoint or call upon me, and I will show that I am able to tell of the future and my control over it."

Verse 12. The Lord again refers to the things that have already been done as evidence of his might. Such a Being can certainly do other things that are great, which the prophet has been predicting all through this passage that were to be done.

Verse 13. *I have raised* is in the past tense as to form but refers to a fact yet to be accomplished. *Him* means Cyrus who was to be brought up to the work planned by the Lord on behalf of the Jews who will have been in Babylonian captivity. *Righteousness* does not refer directly to the personal character or life of Cyrus although he was a good man morally. It means the work God designed for him to do would be right. That work was to cause the release of the Jews from the captivity, then help them get their city of Jerusalem built. The record of this rebuilding and restoration is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. *Not for price nor reward*. Cyrus did not receive any money from God's people for the work he did for them; instead, he contributed money and other material for the great occasion (Ezra 1: 4).

Verse 14. *Labor of Egypt* means the products of that country, because it never failed to produce since it had the benefit of the Nile for irrigation. Ethiopia was just south of Egypt and gained much by trading with other people. This verse predicts that Palestine was to receive some of these desirable things by having them brought over by the producers themselves. *Chains* literally means a bond or fetter, but the meaning of it here is that persons from these places were to come to Jerusalem with the attitude

of those in chains. It will all be done because those heathen people will be convinced that the God of the Jews is the true source of power. The fulfillment of this verse is recorded in Est. 8: 17.

Verse 15. *Hidest thyself* is an acknowledgment that the God of Israel is a mystery to the foolish inhabitants of the earth. His power to overthrow human governments is beyond all calculations, and that power was to be manifested by saving Israel.

Verse 16. This is the same prediction that has been made a number of times, of the cure from idolatry that would result from the captivity. The historical fulfillment of this prophecy may be seen in connection with ch. 1: 25.

Verse 17. This means that Israel will be saved nationally from captivity and restored to her native land. *Everlasting* means age-lasting, and Israel was never again to suffer punishment for the sin of idolatry.

Verse 18. *Formed and made* the earth means God originated the material of which the earth is made and also put it into its shape. *Vain* is from *TOHUW* which Strong defines, "from an unused root meaning to lie waste; a desolation (of surface), i.e. desert." This clause gives the information that God not only created the earth, but he designed it to have a surface that would not be like a waste plain or desert. We have information that other planets were so made, hence the fact that the earth was not and the further fact that the prophet saw fit to tell his readers of it signifies that something of importance was in the mind of the Lord. That important matter is the subject of the next clause which reads *he formed it to be inhabited*. That was never said concerning any other planet which should be regarded as a very significant truth. It is not necessary to go too far in speculation on the subject introduced here, but the impression is strong that no other planet besides the earth was intended by the Creator to be inhabited. Had such been His intention he certainly would have formed them in such a way that they also could "be inhabited." But because the Lord did intend for the earth to be so used he not only gave it a form as we have it, but made the surface of it different from a waste plain, so man could live on it.

Verse 19. A Being who can produce



so great a work as the earth as just described, does not have to use trickery or mysterious means in dealing with the creatures who are to live upon its surface. Hence, when he invited Jacob to seek Him it was not in vain, but was with the understanding that he would not be disappointed if he sought the Lord with a sincere mind. All of the Lord's declarations are true and no one will be left in confusion who honestly tries to receive him.

Verse 20. This verse is a general call to attention for all who will have escaped from bondage in the nations, to realize that idolatry is foolish and contrary to all knowledge. These dumb idols *cannot save*, and the past enslavement of which they have been the victims ought to teach them that truth.

Verse 21. These people are advised to consult with each other on the great subject, considering it in the light of their own experience. Their long suffering as captives in a strange land should be a lesson to them. They should ask each other who was the One to foretell the very facts that they have just been feeling in their own experience. The conclusion they will be impelled to arrive at will be that the one and only true God is the source of all such knowledge. He is a just God and the only one who can save them from their enemies.

Verse 22. God's great deeds both in creation and in his dealings with the nations of men proves that he can give such favors as are beyond all other gods. These facts would justify the general invitation of this verse for all to look to Him for help.

Verse 23. *Sworn by myself* was necessary because there is no greater power or authority in existence by whom to swear. *In righteousness* means the word issued by the mouth of the Lord is right because it will be shown to be the truth. The immediate subject of the passage is God's dealings with his ancient people and the heathen nations associated with them. His great success in all of the predictions and fulfillments seemed to suggest the idea of making some more extensive declarations concerning the distant future in regard to man in general. Hence follows the solemn announcement that the whole human creation will some day bow in acknowledgment of the authority of God. We know this is what the prophet

meant by the prediction for Paul quotes the passage and so applies it in Rom. 14: 11.

Verse 24. The future success of God's plans, assured by what he has accomplished through the past ages, should bring all intelligent creatures to their knees. They should all be constrained to acknowledge Him as the truly strong and righteous ruler of the universe. Those who will make such concessions willingly will be blessed for them, but willingly or otherwise, all must finally make the confession.

Verse 25. *Seed of Israel* or the descendants of Jacob are especially mentioned because at the time of the prophet's writing they were the objects of the Lord's immediate attention.

### ISAIAH 46

Verses 1, 2. This bracket is a prediction against Babylon that will have held the Jews in captivity for 70 years. *Bel* was the Baal of the Babylonians, and the overthrow of that nation would be a blow to their god. *Boweth down* means the god of that heathen nation would be prostrated before the power of an invading force. While Baal was their chief invisible god, the Babylonians had many smaller images they worshiped. But all these were to be of no avail when Cyrus makes his attack upon the city. Instead, the golden images of their boasted gods, helpless to save not only their city but even themselves, will be hauled away as loot on beasts and in wagons.

Verse 3, 4. This bracket predicts the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity to their own land. The Biblical account of the fulfillment is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The historical account was quoted with the comments at ch. 14 of this book. The *remnant* refers to the 42 thousand Jews who survived the years of the captivity. (See Ezra 2: 64.) The word *borne* and others on the subject of nativity and birth are used figuratively. The relationship between God and the Jewish nation was as close as that of a parent and offspring. That closeness was not to cease when the offspring grew to maturity. Even when they become gray with age the Heavenly Father promised to care for them with all the tenderness of a loving parent.

Verse 5. This and the following two verses are a description of idols to

show how weak and useless they are. The bracket begins with the previous challenge for the worshipers of idols to find anyone to whom they could liken their own true God.

Verse 6. *Lavish gold out of the [money] bag* indicates that men bargained for their images in the same way they would purchase any necessity of life. *Hire a goldsmith* just as they would if they wanted to have a pin made to hold their clothing. And such a commercial article was that before which they would fall down and worship!

Verse 7. And this object of worship was so helpless that it had to be carried and put in its place as if it were a piece of furniture. Even some toys of children can keep on moving after being given a start. But after this idol god has been moved it will not proceed after the owner lets go of it; *from his place shall he not remove*. A weak mortal being may not be able to move bodily, yet will be able to indicate some other form of life and intelligence. This manufactured god, however, can make no response when its worshipers cry unto it. Of course such an object could not be able to *save its owner out of trouble*.

Verse 8. After the preceding shameful but just description of the idol god, the prophet attempts to get its servants to come to their senses. They are asked to search their memories in favor of the true God against whom they have been transgressors.

Verse 9. We should not be confused over the frequent repetitions of statements like this verse. The nation of Israel had been guilty of idolatry for so many years. And of all people in the world, they were the less excusable in view of their many experiences that proved beyond all doubt that their God was the true one. Hence the many passages that call attention to the past, such as the present verse.

Verse 10. This is more specific than the preceding verse as to the greatness of the true God over all others. *Declaring the end from the beginning* is a fundamental declaration and is not restricted to any one subject. *Beginning* and *end* are the two extreme poles of any force or activity. *Declaring* is from NAGAD and the leading part of Strong's definition is, "specifically to expose, predict, explain, praise." It thus does not mean to predetermine or foreordain. There

are some things that God has foreordained, but the passage just cited does not require that definition. Its purpose is to express God's complete knowledge of all events that are going to take place, no matter how far they are in the future. *Counsel* means "plan" and *pleasure* means "desire." Since God is able to see into the future that enables him to know what would be best for all concerned and to plan for the same. So it is declared that whatever He plans for the future will be brought to pass regardless of all enemies.

Verse 11. *Ravenous bird* sounds harsher than the original thought intended. The definition in Strong's lexicon is, "a hawk or other bird of prey." It was used with reference to Cyrus, and the illustration was proper for he certainly did prey upon the other heathen kings who resisted him. It would be especially proper for him to take over the resisting birds (heathen kings) since the God of Israel desired to have him perform that work. Cyrus was *from the east* because Persia was in that direction from Babylon, and he was *from a far country* because it was a great distance from Palestine. In this case God not only saw into the future but planned a part of it. But he could not have done so did he not have the ability to see ahead and thus know what would be for the best.

Verses 12, 13. The work of Cyrus that was predicted in the preceding verse was to overthrow Babylon. That event would set Israel free and permit the nation to return to Jerusalem. That logically is the subject of the present paragraph. *Stouthearted* means the strong men of the Jewish nation who had been chief in leading the people into sin. Their punishment will have been complete when Cyrus is called into action, and the righteous purposes of God for restoring his people to their own country will then take place, which is recorded as history in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

## ISAIAH 47

Verse 1. The predictions in this chapter are not all made in the order of their fulfillments. The first five verses are a bracket on the downfall of Babylon. The historical fulfillment is quoted with the comments at ch. 13: 1. *Sit in the dust* is a figurative prediction of the humiliation to be thrust upon Babylon by Cyrus. Strong defines the

word for *virgin* as meaning "sometimes a city or state," and it is so used here to refer to the Babylonian city and Empire. *There is no throne* predicts that the Babylonian Empire will never again have any rule over others. *Daughter of the Chaldeans* means the city that the Chaldeans had possessed and ruled.

Verse 2. The humiliation to be thrust upon Babylon is still the subject of the prophet. The Chaldeans were a proud race and the figurative language is to indicate a woman who is above doing any humble bodily exercises. But the service described in this passage is a prediction of the debased situation that would be brought upon the proud city by the successful attack of Cyrus. Not only was this proud "woman" to be forced into servile work, but her finery of attire and exclusive arranging of her hair and other articles of supposed refinement were to be taken from her. Millstones were used for grinding grain into meal or flour, and only the lowest of slaves were usually employed to do that work by turning the stones round and round by means of a beam attached to the top stone in the form of a large lever. *Uncover thy locks* is rendered "remove thy veil" in the Revised Version and also in Moffatt's translation. It doubtless refers to the veil of the hair which modest women used as a covering in ancient times (1 Cor. 14: 15). *Make bare the leg* indicates that the long train worn by ladies of rank was to be discarded to make possible the manual labor they were to be forced into. *Pass over the river* was required of slaves in securing water for the domestic use of their masters. This service would require them either to discard their long train (trailing robes) or else gather it up so they could wade the streams; that action would expose the leg.

Verse 3. When the proud city of Babylon was thus brought down the condition was *seen* by the world. *Not meet thee as a man* means God would not permit any man to argue with him or to make any kind of interference with the divine plans against Babylon.

Verse 4. The Lord of Hosts is called *redeemer* because he would rescue Israel from the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 5. *Silent* and *darkness* refer to the national "black out" that would be put into effect over the Chaldean

city by the attack of Cyrus. After that event the city was never again to be called the *lady of kingdoms*. This phrase means a city or state or both (see comments at v. 1), and it is a prediction that Babylon was never again to be a capital city nor ever be inhabited. (see the historical fulfillment of this quoted at ch. 13: 1.)

Verse 6. This verse jumps back in point of time and makes a prediction of the captivity. One part of Strong's definition of the original for *polluted* is "to dissolve." God decreed to dissolve his nation and give it over into the hand of Babylon. The pronoun *thine* refers to that kingdom because it was the subject of the preceding verse. *Didst show them no mercy* is a prediction of Babylon's treatment of the Israelites during the captivity. The people of God deserved some severe punishment for their iniquities, yet the nation that was to accomplish that purpose was to feel the hand of God in revenge for it because of its motive in the affair. That was why the destruction was threatened against it as per the preceding verse.

Verse 7. This boastful attitude of Babylon is well illustrated by the words of the king of the city as recorded in Dan. 4: 30-32.

Verse 8. *Dwellest carelessly* means that Babylon was enjoying a corrupt and luxurious life, unmindful of whether it was right or wrong or of what might be the outcome of it. *Not sit as a widow* is figurative and means that Babylon would not become "a desolate place." *Loss of children* denotes the loss of citizens of the great city, and Babylon boasted that she would never suffer such a loss.

Verse 9. The prophet predicted that both evils would come upon the city. It was to have its citizens taken off and the place become desolate and waste continually.

Verse 10. This verse continues the accusations against the Babylonians for their boastful attitude. *Trusted in thy wickedness* means Babylon felt secure even while continuing in her wickedness. This view of the phrase is indicated by the following one, *none seeth me*. Because the Lord is not visible it is common for the wicked people of the earth to fall into a feeling of security. Such a state of mind will cause them to be *perverted* (turned aside) from the right way. But the wicked city of Babylon was

soon to realize that all her movements and even the evil thoughts in the minds of her rulers were to be exposed and punished.

Verse 11. From this verse to the close of the chapter is a bracket of predictions of the overthrow of the city of Babylon which was the capital of the government. There is a long historical quotation on this event in connection with ch. 13: 7, 8 of this book. I urge the reader to find that place and have it before him as he follows the comments on the present verses. Especially should he note the outstanding expressions in connection with the italicized words of our bracket. *Not know from whence it ariseth* was fulfilled when it said, "Had the Babylonians known what Cyrus was about." *Desolation; suddenly*, came in one night and thus was not a long-drawn-out affair. (See Dan. 5: 30.)

Verse 12. *Stand* predicts that Babylon will rely on her so-called wise men to explain the crisis and point out some way of escape (Dan. 5: 7).

Verse 13. *Wearied* is from *LAWAH* and Strong defines it, "a primitive root; to tire; (figuratively) to be (or make) disgusted." The clause predicts that Babylon will become tired and disgusted with these special wise men because of their failure. Yet the challenge is made for her to go ahead and call for them. *Astrologers* were those who pretended to foretell events by the appearance of the heavens. *Stargazers* were those who claimed to make predictions by looking at the stars. *Monthly prognosticators* were men who professed to give predictions based on the beginning dates of the months, and that was because the new moon was observed at the beginning of the month. In a derisive way the prophet calls upon Babylon to call for all these mysterious servants who had claimed to have superhuman knowledge. This very call was made by the king of Babylon as recorded in Dan. 5: 7.

Verse 14. The words on the subject of *fire* are used figuratively, referring to the complete failure of these so-called wise men of Babylon. They were not to be able to do themselves any good or to help the king out of his difficulties.

Verse 15. *Wander to his quarter* predicts that when the king calls for these men to help him, they will be unable to do so. Realizing this they

will retire from their monarch and shall go in confusion to their personal homes.

### ISAIAH 48

Verse 1. The reader should be cautioned to "keep his bearings" as to the dates of the things which he is studying. Many times it sounds as if the language should be regarded in the same way as history, and that he is being told of conditions and events being such at the time of the writing. According to actual dates the prophet Isaiah was through his writing a hundred years before the Babylonian captivity as will be seen by reading the first verse of the book. Hence, when the language seems to be history from its tense form, it may be a prophetic statement. However, where the Lord accuses the nation of its idolatry and other sins, it can be and often is referring to conditions in general. Such is true of a great portion of this chapter although it will contain some predictions which will be noted as they appear. *Jacob* and *Israel* refer to the same people because the latter was an additional name given to Jacob when he had his wrestling test with the angel (Gen. 32: 28). *Waters* is figurative and is used in the sense of fountains or fountainhead or sources. The phrase *waters of Judah* means that Judah was the source from which the nation sprang. It was right to swear by the name of God if done with due respect. But the nation through its leaders had made a mere form of their services in that they were done insincerely.

Verse 2. They made much ado of their relation to the holy city (Jerusalem) because it was the capital of the kingdom. *Stay themselves* means they professed to depend on the God of Israel. That was the proper profession to make but they refused to follow the counsel of the One on whom they claimed to rely.

Verse 3. Their profession of trust in the wisdom of God should have been sincere. They had plenty of evidence that He was entitled to such trust since he had made far-reaching statements that had all been proved to be true by the test of time. *Suddenly* means instantly, *and they came to pass*. God did not make his predictions in the nature of a continuous speech, "stalling for time" as it were, so that the things being predicted would have time to begin showing themselves even while the predictions were being made.



Any human being might do that kind of "prophesying." God uttered his predictions in short time and a long while before they were to come to pass. History then recorded the occurrences of the events just as they had been predicted. All of that proved His infinite foreknowledge and should have caused the house of Israel to be warned when God told them what was coming upon them at last.

Verse 4. Iron and brass being metals are used figuratively to illustrate the stiff, unyielding, stubborn disposition of the Israelites in spite of God's many attempts to bring them to respect him and his laws for their guidance.

Verse 5. This verse opens with about the same thought as that in verse 3, which see. The added argument here is concerning the claim that might have been made for the idol. Had the remarks been made on the events while they were taking place, even though they were true and significant and had the appearance of having come from a source of great intelligence, the idolaters might have attributed the statements to their gods. That is, they would have insisted that the prophet obtained his information from the idol notwithstanding it was made of dead material of the earth.

Verse 6. Instead of dealing only with current events, the prophets of God have made predictions of events that were far in the future. Many of these seemed unreasonable or impossible of becoming facts, yet history proved them to have been true and thus were inspired by a wisdom that was not human or by such a dead thing as a man-made god, derived from the metal of the earth or the tree of the forest.

Verse 7. The proofs of God's exclusive wisdom were drawn from facts that were new as to date and yet which had been foretold many years before. This would prevent the idol worshipers from laying claim to a knowledge of them previously.

Verse 8. This verse sums up one line of argument for the divine source of the prophet's writing. The predictions were made long before the present generation even lived, yet were being fulfilled right before their eyes. All of this precaution was taken by the Lord because he knew his people would *deal treacherously*, which means in an underhanded manner. *Called a transgressor from the womb* means

the nation had a lifelong reputation for disobedience of the law of God.

Verse 9. This verse has to do with the mercy of God in his dealings with his wayward people. However, that mercy was to be extended toward them more on behalf of his own good name than because of their deserts. This is why their future captivity (which is about to be predicted) was not going to be fatal to them as a nation.

Verse 10. *Have refined* is past tense which we have learned is a common form of speech with inspired prophets. The prediction in this verse is of the Babylonian captivity which was to come a hundred years in the future. *Refined* means to be purified by fire so as to separate the good metal from the dross. *Not with silver* means not for the purpose of obtaining literal silver. In other words, the refining process that was to come upon Israel was for a far more important purpose than that of purifying silver. *Furnace of affliction* is a figurative prediction of the Babylonian captivity. That experience was designed to purify the nation of Israel by separating it from the dross of idolatry. It accomplished that purpose as proved by the historical quotation made in connection with the comments at ch. 1: 25.

Verse 11. It will be well to have the complete definition in Strong's lexicon for the original of *sake*. The Hebrew word is *MAHAN* and the definition is, "properly heed, i.e. purpose; used only adverbially, on account of (as a motive or an aim), teleologically [referring to motive] in order that." *Polluted* is from *CHALAL*, and the part of Strong's definition that applies here is, "to break one's word." The verse as a whole means that God will not utterly forsake his people. He has promised many times to be their shield and preserver. And so in order to make his word good and maintain the honor of his name, he will come to the rescue of Israel as soon as she has suffered the punishment necessary to bring her to repentance.

Verse 12. *Jacob* and *Israel* have been explained as referring to the same people. The pronouns for God are used without naming Him otherwise. That indicates the greatness of the One who is the *first* and the *last* which means he is without beginning or end but has always been in existence and always will be.

Verse 13. *My hand* and *my right*

hand have the same application. The meaning is that God has made and controls the things of the universe with his own hand; also that such use of his power is right.

Verse 14. The first part of this verse is another call to attention addressed to everybody in general. The Lord then challenges them to point out any person who had been able to see into the future and predict the things that were going to take place. No one would be prepared to make such a declaration, much less have anything to do with the transactions among the nations. God's reason for what he did in connection with Jacob (v. 12) was that he *hath loved him*. Hence the Lord predicted that he would do what pleased him concerning the nation that was to be used as an instrument in chastising the wayward children of Jacob. That nation is designated by both Babylon and Chaldeans. The latter were a special race of ancient people who finally came into power in Babylon. After that time the two names were used to denote the same government, especially if only one was used in a single passage. When used as they are in this verse the Chaldeans mean the people of that particular name of which the city of Babylon was the capital. This government was to be used to punish the Jewish nation, after that service the Chaldeans themselves were to be severely treated, and the latter part of the verse is a reference to that event. The historical fulfillment of it was quoted in the comments at ch. 13: 1.

Verse 15. *Have called him* means the call of Cyrus although his name is not mentioned here. But we know that is the meaning of the statement since it was Cyrus whom God called to overthrow Babylon and set the Jews free. *He shall make his way prosperous* means that Cyrus will prosper in his work against Babylon. Of course we understand it would be because he will have been called to the work by the Lord.

Verse 16. God declares his word has been "above board" so that no one can complain of having been put at a disadvantage. The prophet is writing the words of God by the guidance of the spirit of God so that was bound to be true.

Verse 17. Isaiah further repeats the words that the Lord was giving him. Again the people of Israel are reminded that the Lord is their re-

deemer which had special reference to their release from the captivity. *Teacheth thee to profit* means that Israel would always prosper if she would heed the teaching of this Redeemer.

Verse 18. This verse is a pathetic reflection on the past stubborn actions of the Jewish people. Instead of profiting by the kind and wise counsels of their God, they had gone off after idols and false devotions. *Peace as a river* is an illustration of the continuous, agreeable and abundant flowing of the blessings that come from the throne of God to those who will avail themselves thereof.

Verse 19. When the nation of Israel was compelled to live 70 years in captivity it reduced its number until only a remnant survived (Ezra 2: 64). The present verse means that just the reverse of that would have existed had they been true to the Lord.

Verse 20. Notwithstanding the disobedience of his people, God continued to love them and promised to deliver them out of their afflictions. This verse and the following refers to the return from the captivity. *Go ye forth of Babylon* is the prophet's style of speech, predicting that Israel would go out of the Babylonian captivity. This prediction was made almost 200 years before it was fulfilled. The Biblical account of the deliverance is recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The historical account was quoted in connection with ch. 14: 1. They were to be in a state of joy over their freedom when they went, which is evident from the account in the books just named. Although Cyrus was the man who was to have charge of the great event, they were told to attribute their release to the Lord.

Verse 21. *Led them through the deserts* was fulfilled in Ezra 8: 15-32. The remainder of the verse is figurative and refers to the providential care that God was to give his people as they made their journey from Babylon to Palestine.

Verse 22. There is no special time or place for the application of this verse. It is a declaration of truth that is always in force. It does not mean that the wicked man will never think he is doing well and that he is free from care. In fact, such a person is apt to conclude that all is well with him since he does not see any evidence of God's displeasure. (See Ecclesiastes 8: 11.) But the time will come when he

will realize that his feeling of security was but "the calm before the storm," and he will then feel the wrath of God upon him.

### ISAIAH 49

Verse 1. Some of the prophecies have a two-fold application due to the subject matter involved. That is because so many of the things that happened to ancient Israel and at that time to others, were like those of spiritual Israel or at the time of that dispensation. These remarks will be found to be true of much of this chapter, and the language is in the first person as to grammatical form in many of the verses. *Isles* is from a word that is defined "a habitable spot." The sentence is a call for the inhabitants of the earth to listen. The speaker is either Cyrus or Christ or both, because each was named before he was born (ch. 45: 1-4; Matt. 1: 21). The words *from far* would have a special meaning in the case of Christ because he was to be preached to the Gentiles who were considered the people "far off" (Eph. 2: 13).

Verse 2. The general thought in this verse is the support which God promised to give Cyrus in his work against the Babylonians, and the backing he would furnish for Jesus in his service of truth for the whole world.

Verse 3. The language of this verse would seem to be applied more directly to Israel instead of either Cyrus or Jesus. But it was because both of these persons were to act for God on behalf of fleshly or spiritual Israel.

Verse 4. The prophet is now more especially concerned for the fate of the people of Israel who were to be punished for their sins. They are represented as lamenting the vanity of their actions. Yet they had not lost all hope for they expressed confidence in the judgment of their God. That constituted a prediction that their affairs would yet "take a turn for the better." Such was to be the case at least and the next verse will be more directly on that subject.

Verse 5. *Formed thee from the womb* denotes that they owed their existence to the Lord. *Bring Jacob again to him* is a prediction of the return from captivity. *Though Israel be not gathered* refers to the time just before the release from bondage in Babylon. Even while the nation of Israel was *not gathered*; while still in captivity, it was glorious in the eyes of the Lord,

which was the reason he was determined to bring them unto him in Jerusalem again.

Verse 6. The first half of this verse refers to Cyrus who was to *raise up the tribes of Jacob* and restore them to their own land of Palestine. The last part is a prediction of the service of Christ in bringing salvation to all the nations of the earth. This is signified by the mention of the Gentiles who had not been included in the provisions made under the Jewish system.

Verse 7. This verse is a prediction of Christ. *His Holy One* means that the Lord is the holy one of Christ, and this Lord is making a favorable prophecy of what will happen to Christ in spite of the unfavorable things that some will do. *Man despiseth* means that Christ was to be belittled by men, which is abundantly proved in the accounts of the Gospel. *The nation abhorreth*. Even his own nation, the Jews, denied Jesus and had him put to death. *Servant of rulers* predicts the respect that Christ was to show for constituted government, and it was fulfilled in one instance as recorded in Matt. 17: 26, 27. *Kings . . . princes shall worship* predicts that the greatest of persons would finally become admirers of Christ. All of these things were to be done because of the faithful watch and care that God would have over his beloved Son.

Verse 8. Paul cites this verse in 2 Cor. 6: 2 where we know he is writing about the grace of God for salvation of man through Christ. *Give thee for a covenant* was promised through Abraham when God said to him: "And in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22: 18). *To establish the earth* means to offer the support of salvation to the people of the earth. *Inherit the desolate heritages* applies first to the return of the Jews to their own land, and second to the spiritual benefits to be offered the world through Christ.

Verse 9. The first clause of this verse was fulfilled the first time when Cyrus told the Jews to go free out of Babylon. It was fulfilled the second time when Christ offered spiritual freedom to all who were prisoners under the bondage of sin. The remainder of the verse pertains to Christ and his service of salvation for humanity.

Verse 10. Spiritual favors are often illustrated figuratively. They are contrasted to things that are undesirable,

and likened to those that are desirable. The absence of any ungratified hunger and thirst and scorching heat would all be a great favor. Such a condition is likened to the spiritual comforts that Christ was to provide for mankind. *Spring of water* suggests the refreshing influences that the Gospel was to have upon those who would accept the same upon the Lord's own conditions.

Verse 11. *Mountains a way and highways exalted* corresponds with the preparatory work that John the Baptist was to do for Christ (Luke 3: 5).

Verse 12. The blessings of Christ were to be offered to the people of the world, not to the Jews only as was the case under Moses. *Sinim* is defined in Strong's lexicon, "plural of an otherwise unknown name; Sinim, a distant Oriental [eastern] region." The word is used as a specific instance of the far-reaching provisions through Christ.

Verse 13. This verse is a bid for rejoicing over the redemption of the Jews from captivity. *Heavens and earth* are two extremes or ends of the universe and the expressions denote that a general state of rejoicing would be experienced when the enemy was overthrown and the people of God released. *Mountains* is used figuratively and signifies that men and governments would have cause for rejoicing at the fortunate turn of affairs of the Jews who had been under such depression.

Verse 14. Zion is used in this place to mean the Jews in captivity. They were in a discouraged frame of mind and many of them despaired of ever having any relief. This is the same thing that is set forth in Ezk. 37: 1-11 and Psa. 137.

Verse 15. As an argument of reassurance the Lord reminds his people of the close tie that binds a human parent and child together. It is not expected that such a father or mother could be unmindful of his offspring. Much less would the divine Father forget the people whom he had begotten in the time of great pressure and opposition in Egypt and the wilderness.

Verse 16. It is considered a great and reassuring favor for the Lord to "hold us, as it were, in the hollow of his hand." He makes it more precious than that by promising to have them *graven* upon the palms of his hands. That would make it permanent so that

it would be out of the question for the Lord ever to forget them. *Walls* is from a Hebrew word which Strong defines, "a wall of protection." The significance of the phrase is that God is always concerned about the protection of his people which is generally associated with the use of walls.

Verse 17. *Shall make haste* means the delivery of the Jews from their captivity will be prompt when the time comes. *Shall go forth of thee* denotes the withdrawal of the forces that had been oppressing Israel.

Verse 18. This verse is a prediction of the interest that will be shown toward the Jews by the other nations; an instance of it is recorded in Est. 8: 16. *Clothe thee with them* was fulfilled when the citizens of Persia furnished materials for the use of the Jews in restoring the state of their capital city (Ezra 1: 4).

Verse 19. *Waste and desolate places* refers to the land of Palestine. While the Jews were in captivity their country was neglected and somewhat overrun by the heathen nations, all of which was to be changed after the return. *Shall be too narrow* means the population of the rightful citizens shall increase until they will have to spread out and occupy more territory. *They that swallow thee* refers to the heathen invaders, and they were to be forced to vacate the land and leave it in possession of its true owners after they got back from the land of captivity.

Verse 20. In Ezra 2: 64 is a statement of the remnant that survived the captivity. Such a decrease of their number is what is meant here by the words *hast lost the other*. They were to be replaced in such numbers that request will be made for more room as a place in which to dwell.

Verse 21. Here the prophet blends his predictions of the ancient with spiritual Israel. The former will be surprised to see so great a replenishing of her people after the desolation of the past years. The increase will be so unexpectedly great that the inquiry will be made as to how it came about. This question was another time for the "telescope" (see the illustration in "General Remarks" at the beginning of Isaiah) to be extended until the prophet could see into the time of Christ. He considered the improved situation of ancient Israel an apt type of the increase of God's spiritual chil-



dren under Christ which is the subject of the next two verses.

Verse 22. Under the Mosaic system only the Jews were considered God's children, but under Christ the Gentiles were to be included. The *standard* or signal of authority under Christ will be raised among them and they will be invited to come into close relationship with the Lord. The language in the close of the verse is what is called accommodative and refers to the joyous activities of those who had for years been excluded from the Jewish Dispensation. (see the fulfillment in Acts 11: 18.)

Verse 23. This is a continuation of the same prediction that was given in the preceding verse. It is a figurative picture of how the various classes of mankind, the high and the low, will accept the Gospel and become worshippers of God in fellowship with the humblest of His children. (See Acts 17: 4, 12.)

Verse 24. The "telescope" is again returned to its former position and the prophet sees the events at the end of the Babylonian captivity. The prediction is made in the form of a question, but the force of the thought will be understood by adding "yes" at the end of the verse. *Lawful captives* is rendered "the captivity of the just" in the margin, and the R. V. as well as the lexicon will sustain it. The meaning is that the captivity of the Jews was just, because the Lord decreed it to take place. In view of that, it would seem wonderful if such a captivity could be reversed.

Verse 25. The Lord assures his people that the *mighty* (meaning the Babylonian) will be forced to give up the captives whom God had permitted them to take. *I will contend* refers to the attack that Cyrus would make upon Babylon under the instructions of the Lord. (See the historical quotation at ch. 13: 1, 7, 8.)

Verse 26. *Feed them with their own flesh* is a figurative way of saying the Babylonians would be given an "overdose of their own medicine." They had oppressed the Jews and taken undue joy from the unfortunate experiences that they had suffered while in captivity. That period will be past, however, when this prediction is fulfilled, and the Babylonians will themselves feel the sting of God's jealousy for his people. *Drunken* is from SHAKAR, and Strong defines it, "in a

qualified sense, to satiate [act the glutton]." The clause means they will be fed their own blood (figuratively, of course) until it will make them as sick as if they had drunk too much sweet wine. The statement has no connection with the ordinary subject of intoxication. One meaning of the original for *flesh* is "person." The statement means that all persons will be made to realize that the God of Jacob is the mighty Redeemer of the people who had been oppressed through the years of the captivity.

## ISAIAH 50

Verse 1. The relation between God and ancient Israel has been compared to various others. Sometimes it is a husbandman and vineyard; sometimes to master and servant; at other times it is husband to wife; at others it is parent and child, and the last two are used in this verse. First, the subject of divorcement is considered and the Lord is calling for the wife to show her bill of divorce. This is based on a law of Moses (Deut. 24: 1) that provided a husband with the right to divorce his wife if he was not satisfied with her. As the bill would show the cause of the husband's complaint, if she had been guilty of gross misconduct it would be natural for her to hesitate at producing the writing. Some commentators think this passage means to deny that the wife had any legal paper, and that the aggrieved husband had only *put away* his wife. I believe it means the husband actually divorced her, because the word *put* is from the same word as "send" and "sendeth" in Deut. 24: 1, 3, 4, where we know the husband divorced his wife. And so the bill of divorce that God gave to Israel showed that she was divorced or *put away for her transgressions*. Those sins consisted in her idolatry which was the same as adultery and would certainly arouse the jealousy of God who was the husband (Ex. 20: 5). Using the illustration of parent and child, a provision of the law allowed an unfortunate father to sell his child to pay off a debt (Ex. 21: 7; 2 Ki. 4: 1). In this case the parent was not under necessity to sell his child, but the child had made his own transaction and sold himself. Such a deed was also permitted under the law (Lev. 25: 47, 48), but it was to be done in cases where a man was actually under the stress of poverty. In the case of Israel the

excuse of poverty could not be made because the parent (God) was making abundant provisions for his children. Notwithstanding all this, the aggrieved husband was willing to take his wayward wife back also to redeem his unappreciative children from the hand of their creditors. In the figurative setup of our verse, Zion or Jerusalem is the mother (and wife) and the Israelites are the children.

Verse 2. There is so much blending of the subject matter for the Old and New Testament times that it is difficult in some places to determine which is meant. It appears evident in this verse that God is calling for some one to serve him in bringing about his plan for the people. God also asks why no one responded, and then suggests that some doubt must have been felt as to the power of the Lord. In opposition to such a thought the people are reminded again of the great works of the past.

Verse 3. God's complete control over the elements is the subject of this verse, and that fact should have silenced all resistance to the authority of divine law.

Verse 4. The pronoun *me* is used somewhat indefinitely, and could apply first to the servant who should have answered as per verse 2. Had he done so, God would have given him all necessary qualifications to act on behalf of the needy. In its second application the statements were true of Christ although the prophet seems to have his mind mostly on conditions at the time of Israel's corruptions.

Verse 5. This verse has specific reference to Christ because all of the remarks were true of him. *Was not rebellious* should remind us of Heb. 10: 7.

Verse 6. This verse predicts first the turning of Israel over to the captivity. It also portrays the treatment Christ suffered at the hands of his tormentors. He willingly submitted to their insults and inhuman treatment. *Did not my face from shame and spitting* was fulfilled in Matt. 26: 67; 27: 30; Mark 14: 65.

Verse 7. God promised to help his people Israel after they suffered a while in captivity. He also upheld Jesus in all of his work among his enemies on earth. *Like a flint* means Jesus was unflinching in his devotion to his Father midst all persecution.

Verse 8. God was *near* when ancient

Israel needed someone to defend the nation against the Babylonians, and for that reason the members were encouraged to *stand* together. All of this was especially true in the case of Christ. It is no contradiction that he was put to death after having been shamefully mistreated; that was necessary for the great plan of God in saving the world. But though Christ had to descend into death, he was not forsaken of his Father but was given power to come forth alive.

Verse 9. Those who would condemn Christ are the antecedent of *they*, and their defeat is likened to the destruction of garments by age and moth.

Verse 10. This is a call for all who fear the Lord to heed the voice of his servant. That would have been useful advice for the people of Israel to listen to the warnings through the prophet. It was also of much importance to obey the words of Christ. *Walketh in darkness* means those who are groping in sin without seeking the divine instructions for right living.

Verse 11. This verse refers to those who are in darkness but will not come to the light of divine truth. They prefer to furnish their own light by building a fire (self-righteousness) and walking therein. All such persons will come to nought by the vengeance of God, and *shall lie down in sorrow*.

## ISAIAH 51

Verse 1. This chapter as a whole is a prediction of the return from Babylonian captivity, with an occasional insertion of other specific subject matter and some remarks of a general nature. *Hearken . . . ye that seek the Lord* is addressed to the Jews. It does not mean to acknowledge them as being righteous, for they were to be in bondage because of their iniquities. The clause sets out the idea that if they are willing to seek the Lord they will hearken to him in order to obtain much needed instruction.

Verse 2. This is another passage where the Lord reminds the Jews of the might of their God. It is backed up by what he did for their father Abraham. *Called him alone* denotes that Abraham was without any son when he was called, yet he was made to increase in the number of his descendants and was blessed abundantly in other ways. The argument is that if God could call an old and childless man and make him the ancestor of

many people, then certainly He will be able to take care of those descendants even though they are enslaved for a time by a strong nation.

Verse 3. The first clause is a specific prediction of the release from captivity, Zion being the capital of the home land of the Jews. *Waste places* refers to the neglect of their land while they were away in Babylon. The verse concludes with a figurative description of the restored condition of the land of Palestine to come about after its people get back into it as its rightful inhabitants.

Verse 4. The word of the Lord was to be obeyed by Cyrus and it would cause the release of the people from their captivity. *Make my judgment to rest* means that God's decree would be established and it would bring *light* or instruction to the nation that had been for so many years in the darkness of bondage in a strange land.

Verses 5, 6. This verse is symbolical and refers to the revolution that was to come upon Babylon. It would be accomplished by dethroning her kings and demoting other leading men. It is compared to the idea of removing both the heavens and the earth. It is also likened to the decay of a garment through old age. It does not mean exactly that such things were literally to take place in the universe. The thought is as if it said "even though all these things were to happen, yet *my salvation shall be forever*." It is another way of declaring that the overthrow of Babylon was sure to occur.

Verse 7. This verse has the same meaning as verse 4, which see. It is an assurance that Israel will be able to overcome the reproaches of the enemy nation.

Verse 8. A garment that is eaten with insects would be weak and useless thereafter; likewise the Babylonian government was to be rendered useless to themselves after Cyrus got through with it. *My salvation* refers to the redemption of God's people from captivity. That is, the first application is to that event, and also the generations of mankind to follow will realize that it was a righteous act of the Lord.

Verse 9. We know that God does not have to be reminded of his own strength although the language here might seem to have that meaning. It is the prophet's way of demanding the attention of humanity (generation to

generation, v. 8) to the fact. And as proof of it, the actual achievements of the Lord in the past are cited. Among those are the ones over *Rahab* and the *dragon*. The first word is defined by Strong, "an epithet of Egypt." The second word is defined, "a marine [water] or land monster, i.e. sea-serpent or jackal." It is in reference to the Nile River because the Egyptians worshiped the stream with all its living creatures. By overcoming Egypt with the 10 plagues God showed his superior power over that country and all its gods.

Verses 10, 11. This verse has specific reference to the joy that was to be experienced by the Jews when they come to Jerusalem after the captivity. The Biblical account of the event is recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The historical report may be read in connection with comments at Isa. 14: 1.

Verse 12. With the Lord to comfort Israel the heathen nation should not have been permitted to cause much fear. Human creatures certainly ought not have as much consideration as the Lord who has made all beings and things.

Verse 13. *Lord thy maker* is a very significant phrase. A being who can create a living creature after His own image is surely great enough to care for him. The enemy nation that was to hold the Jews in captivity would have to rely on the strength of its walls that are made of earthly material. Yet those very materials were made by the same God who made mankind. Such a Creator could certainly see that the inferior materials of his handiwork would be overcome if necessary to release the superior works. The conclusion is that Israel should not be frightened at the threatening attitude of the nation holding them in captivity.

Verse 14. *Hasteneth* is from an original that Strong defines, "to hurry, promptly." The thought is that when the time comes the Jews will go promptly from the land of their captivity, *the pit*, being a figurative reference to Babylon.

Verse 15. *Divided the sea* refers to the opening of the Red Sea for passage of the Israelites (Ex. 14). That was done to allow them to escape from bondage in the land of Egypt. It is referred to here as an argument in support of the prediction that the

same people would be released from the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 16. *Put my words in thy mouth* means the Lord brought his knowledge near his people to show them that the divine care was over them. *Heavens* and the associated terms are figurative, referring to the national forms of life among the Israelites. God proposed to establish his people again in their own land and recognize the inhabitants of Zion, capital of the country, as His people.

Verse 17. From here to the close of verse 21 is a bracket that predicts the experiences and conditions of Israel in captivity. *Hast drunk* is past tense in form but is a prophesy of what was to take place when the Jews were taken into the land of Babylon. For many years a common figure of speech for the bitter experience of life was to refer to it as "drinking the bitter cup," or some such like expression. (See Psa. 11: 6; 73: 10; 75: 8; Zech. 12: 2; Matt. 20: 23; 26: 39.) God's punishment of his people for their sins is referred to as the act of drinking from a cup filled with the wine of divine wrath. The dregs are the settlements in the bottom of the cup. The experiences of the Jews were to be so bitter that they were illustrated by the act of draining the cup down to the very dregs. But they were not to be allowed to stop there; they must squeeze the dregs to get a little more of the wine of God's wrath that is being held therein.

Verse 18. The people of Israel had yielded to the influence of their priests and prophets who led them off into the worship of idols. But when the misfortune of the captivity came upon them, there was not a man of their number who was able to lead them out of their trouble; all were punished together.

Verse 19. These severe terms predicted in a general way the undone condition the nation was to suffer at the hands of the Babylonians. *By whom shall I comfort thee* indicates that no relief would be found for Israel in the distress of the captivity until the Lord was ready to take a hand and put an end to their bondage.

Verse 20. The prostrated condition of the Jews in Babylon was the design of God to punish them for their disobedience. The figurative language in this verse is a prediction of that situation.

Verse 21. *Drunken but not with wine* is another figure of speech referring to the state of being overcome by the distress of the captivity. However, the Lord never forgot his people and now calls upon them to hear what he has to say for consolation.

Verse 22. The literal fact that is predicted in this verse is the overthrow of Babylon. It is described with the same figure of a *cup* that was used in connection with the people of Israel in verse 17. The cup of *trembling* (defined "reeling") was to be taken out of the hand of Israel which means she was no more to be afflicted by the bitterness of a national captivity.

Verse 23. With all of the same meaning of the figure, the Babylonians were to be handed the *cup* and forced to drink of it. Not because God did not want them to afflict his people, but because they took too much personal delight in oppressing the unfortunate captives. For the Biblical account of this downfall of Babylon see the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. For the historical account see quotation at ch. 13: 1.

## ISAIAH 52

Verse 1. This chapter is a mixture of two subjects, the release of the Jews from captivity and the era of the Gospel. The direct application of this verse is the former of the mentioned subjects. *Awake, awake* means to rouse the people of God that they may receive the good news of their predicted deliverance from their oppressor and their return to the beloved Jerusalem. *There shall no more come*, etc., means the people of God would never again be taken away into captivity. In its spiritual application it denotes that when the church is set up in Jerusalem it will be occupied by clean and circumcised (consecrated) people.

Verse 2. *Dust* in symbolic language means humiliation and oppression. *Shake thyself* means the Jews were to cast off the dust of their shame and then *sit down* in peace and honor. The captivity was to be lifted from them and they were to be again a free nation.

Verse 3. In regular business transactions if an article is sold or pawned for a certain sum, it may be redeemed by paying the amount of the pawn. In the case of the Israelites they *sold* or pawned themselves without having received anything from their creditors



(the Babylonians). In like manner they were to be reclaimed without the consideration of a ransom price. This would be appropriate since there will be a change of "creditor" and Cyrus would have nothing invested in those people. It was to be a free discharge from the condition of slavery and thus Cyrus was to receive no ransom money for the ones whom he found in bondage in the country that he captured.

Verse 4. This verse is a brief reference to some previous oppressions the Lord's people had suffered at the hands of the heathen. The instance of the Egyptian case began in Gen. 46: 7 and the Assyrian invasion is recorded in 2 Ki. 17: 6. It is true that both of these events had been decreed by the Lord, yet the oppressors were destined to feel the divine wrath because of the attitude toward the captives. The second instance, however, embraced the ten tribes only who had gone off with Jeroboam and formed the northern kingdom known thereafter as the Kingdom of Israel.

Verse 5. At the time of this writing the prophet had in view the two tribes who had remained with the lawful headquarters in Jerusalem and were known as the Kingdom of Judah. This kingdom was also destined to go into captivity and this verse is going forward to the period of its captivity and describing the character of the Babylonians who were to have their hold on God's people. This heathen nation not only was mistreating the Jews but was blaspheming the name of their God.

Verse 6. In revenge for their mistreatment of the captives and for their disrespect for the name of their God, the Babylonians were to be brought under and the victory turned to the benefit of the unfortunate people.

Verse 7. At the favorable turn of affairs for ancient Israel, the "telescope" was extended so the prophet could see another and more important release for the people of the world. The era of the Gospel was destined to offer freedom for a world of people who were in the bondage of sin. We know this verse was a prediction of the Gospel period for Paul so applies it in Rom. 10: 15. *Feet* is from *REGEL* which Strong defines, "a foot (as used in walking); by implication, a step." The clause means that the footsteps or manner of life that leads a man to preach the Gospel will be regarded as beautiful or pleasant to the Lord.

Verse 8. In ancient times the cities had men stationed on the walls for the approach of either friend or foe. This verse refers to the arrangement to illustrate the joy at seeing the exiled citizens returning. *See eye to eye* means the watchmen will all see together because the return will be so complete and show evidence of God's presence.

Verse 9. This is a prediction in the form of history that the Lord's people will be comforted and relieved of their oppression brought on by the captivity. *Waste places in Jerusalem* refers to the fact that the country was neglected while the inhabitants were in exile in a heathen land.

Verse 10. *Made bare* denotes that the nations were to see the strength of God's arm in the rescuing of his people from their bondage. It was true that the change from Babylonian to Persian rule was so revolutionary that all nations knew about it.

Verse 11. *Depart ye* is another form of prediction that the Jews would leave the heathen city of Babylon. That was an idolatrous country and the Jews had been required to participate in their practices while in the control of the idolaters. That was a decree of God and was to cure them of their tendency toward the evil religion. But the cure will have been effected when the period of release comes and when they go they will leave all of their idolatry behind them.

Verse 12. *Not go out with haste* is a contrast of their departure from Egypt (Ex. 12: 11). At that time they were urged to leave the country and were so rushed about it that they did not have time to let their bread become leavened. It was not to be that way when they left Babylon although there was not to be any undue delay. But their leaving would be in perfect order and free from all fear or panic. God was to be their *rereward* or general guard to insure their safe journey.

Verse 13. Again the "telescope" was extended and the prophet could see into the time of Christ. He saw this *servant* of God exalted before the eyes of the people.

Verse 14. Many people were stunned or *astounded* (astonished) at the works of Jesus to see that such an unpretentious person could accomplish the things that he did. (See Matt. 7: 28; 13: 54; Mark 10: 26; Matt. 9: 8.)

Verse 15. The people who are re-

ferred to in the preceding verse were few when compared with the number who were destined to see the wonderful power of Jesus as it would be manifested through his Gospel. The original for *sprinkle* is rendered by the word "starile" in the A.R.V., and the connection would justify it. The word *astonied* in the preceding verse and *sprinkle* in this have the same force. They have the idea of causing surprise or astonishment at the demonstrations of the wonderful works of Jesus. We are also to catch the thought that *many nations* had reference to the truth that Gentiles as well as Jews would be called to service under Christ.

### ISAIAH 53

Verse 1. This entire chapter is a prediction concerning Christ and others connected with him in his great work on earth for the introduction of the Gospel. We will not be confused by the present or past tense of many phrases since that feature of inspired prophecy has been explained frequently. This verse is quoted in two places in the New Testament which makes it plain as to the application. The first place is John 12: 38 and is used in connection with the personal teaching of Christ. The other citation is in Rom. 10: 16 and is applied to the preaching of the apostles of Christ. Therefore we know the verse is a prediction in question form that the majority of people were going to reject the truth when it was preached. *Arm of the Lord* has reference to his power, and most of the people failed to see or realize that power because they would not hear the truth that portrayed it to them.

Verse 2. *He (Christ) shall grow up before him (God). Tender plant* is from ROWNEQ which Strong defines, "a sucker; hence a twig (of a tree felled and sprouting)." *Root* means he was to grow up as from a root of a tree in dry ground. Jesus came from the stock of Israel which was in a rather decaying condition at the time. That is why his appearance in the world is compared to the sucker and sprout as above. *No form nor comeliness* should not be interpreted carelessly. We know that any living creatures would have some shape. But the entire description in the last half of the verse means that nothing in the form or personal appearance of Jesus would attract the attention of mankind. We do not have to conclude that he was unusually homely, neither do we have the

right to picture him as a very handsome man as many artists do.

Verse 3. To *despise* means to belittle or treat with contempt and that was the way men treated Christ. No doubt part of the reason was his humble, unpretentious appearance and surroundings. (As an instance of it see the statement of Nathanael in John 1: 46.) *Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. In the lexicon the leading words of this clause have both a literal and figurative definition. Since Jesus had a body that was both human and divine, it is reasonable to conclude that both senses of the words applied to his experiences. In one instance we may be sure the literal sense was meant (John 4: 6). That text says that Jesus was wearied with his journey and sat down on the well. Thayer defines the word for *wearied*, "to grow weary, tired, exhausted." If our Lord could become tired in body from physical exercise, it is logical that he could experience other afflictions of the flesh. And it would also be true that he could know what it is to be sorrowful and concerned in a situation of grief and disappointment. His actions and words at the grave of Lazarus (John 11: 33-35) prove the above conclusion to be correct and also demonstrate the language in Heb. 4: 15. But while Jesus never resorted to his supernatural power as a personal help in his own afflictions, yet his superior knowledge enabled him to understand all the more thoroughly those of others; hence the phrase *acquainted with grief*. *We hid* refers to no particular persons but to mankind in general. The thought is that Jesus was so humble and unattractive from the popular standpoint that men turned their faces from him as if they were ashamed to countenance him. *Esteemed him not* means that Jesus was belittled by humanity and yet *we* were not concerned about it.

Verse 4. The prophet writing by inspiration declares that Jesus would bear the griefs and sorrows of others. But hardhearted men *esteemed* or considered the afflictions of Jesus were a stroke of chastisement from God. Such is the meaning of the closing part of this verse.

Verse 5. The inspired prophet corrects the wrong thinking of *we* as to why Jesus was afflicted. It was not because of any transgressions of his (he had none) but it was because of ours. On the same principle as the

above Jesus was bruised because of the iniquities of others, the very ones who had belittled him. *Chastisement of our peace* means the chastisement that man should have suffered in order to satisfy the Father and be at peace with him. But that chastisement would have been so severe that it would have been impossible for man to endure it, hence Jesus took the blows instead. *By his stripes we are healed* has the same idea of substitution by the innocent on behalf of the guilty that the other illustrations of the verse have. But this one is peculiarly interesting because it supposes a transfer of conditions from one person to another that could be accomplished only by miracles. *Stripes* is from CHABURAH which Strong defines, "properly bound (with stripes), i.e. a weal (or black-and-blue mark itself)." It is the word for "blueness" in Prov. 20: 30 where it says, "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil." The black-and-blue or blueness of a wound indicates that the blood is circulating and that will finally wash away the infection. Our passage represents man as suffering from deserved wounds that are not being cured. Jesus then suffered himself to be wounded and have the benefits of his circulation (blueness of the wound) transferred to the otherwise incurable wounds of sinful man.

Verse 6. The pronoun *we* has a more definite application than it did in earlier verses of this chapter. It has specific reference to the apostles who deserted the Lord before they realized that he had risen from the dead (John 21: 3). "I go a fishing" in this passage fulfills *turned every one to his own way* in our verse in Isaiah. *Like sheep* is said because of the disposition of that animal to become panicky and flee if its master is taken from it (see Matt. 26: 31). *Hath laid on him* sets forth a situation where all of the persons in a group engaged in a task desert but one, and he is compelled to perform the task alone.

Verse 7. *Opened not his mouth* in protest or complaint is the meaning. We should not think of Jesus as one who would be sullen when being mistreated, for he did speak when asked questions and when general interests called for it (see Matt. 27: 11; Luke 22: 70). But when it was a matter of mistreatment and false accusation *he opened not his mouth* (see Matt. 26: 63). *Sheep before her shearers is*

*dumb*. The last word is from ALAM and Strong defines it "a primitive root; to tie fast; hence (of the mouth) to be tongue-tied." If the reader has ever watched a sheep being sheared and observed the look of dejection in its face, he can appreciate the illustration here. But we must not think of that attitude of Jesus as being from any sense of shame on his part. He was bowed down over the awful condition of mankind through sin that made it necessary for him to be put to shame on their behalf.

Verse 8. *Taken from prison and judgment*. Prison is from OTSER and Strong defines it "constraint." This clause is rendered in Acts 8: 33, "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away." The meaning of the passage is that Jesus did not have a fair hearing but by constraint and unjust verdict he was condemned to die. *Generation* is used in the sense of age or period of time and *declare* is defined by Thayer in Acts 8: 33, "set forth, recount, relate in full . . . describe." The passage means that it would be difficult if not impossible to describe fully the people of the age in which Christ lived. As a specification of the wickedness of that generation the prophet states that they cut the Lord off from the land of the living. However, they would not have been able to carry out their wicked design against Christ had it not been the will of God for it to happen. But the tragic event was necessary for the salvation of man which is the significance of the words, *for the transgressions of my people was he stricken*.

Verse 9. *Grave with the wicked and with the rich*. In these few words are predictions of two separate and opposite kinds of events. The enemies of Jesus classed him with the vile criminals by crucifying him between two thieves. It was a special disgrace to be executed by crucifixion and such victims were even denied honorable burial. By treating Jesus as they did the expectation was that he would receive the same kind of burial (if any) as the thieves. It was in view of that situation that the prophet saw him making his grave *with the wicked*. But a rich and righteous man by the name of Joseph, (Matt. 27: 57-60) had doubtless feared just such an event and wished to prevent it. He possessed a tomb near the place of crucifixion which had never been used by anybody. Having obtained possession of

the body of Jesus from the governor, Joseph laid it away in his own burial place. This is what the prophet saw when he wrote that Jesus made his grave *with the rich*. Because is rendered "although" by the A.S.V., by Moffatt and some others, and Strong's lexicon does not disagree with it. The sense of the passage also would call for such a rendering. Hence the clause means Jesus relieved the mentioned dishonor by the wicked men *although he had done no violence*; they had executed an innocent man.

Verse 10. *Pleased the Lord to bruise him*. God did not find personal pleasure in the suffering of Christ, but it was his will that he suffer so that man might be saved. *Soul* in the Old Testament is from *NEPESH* and its primary meaning is "a breathing creature." The clause means that Christ was put to death (ceased breathing) as an offering for the sins of the world. After God saw his seed (Christ) go through the sacrificial offering he took the case in hand and rescued him again from death. By doing this the Lord *prolonged his days* and declared to the world that his Son should never die again (Rom. 6: 9).

Verse 11. *He (God) shall see the travail (worry) of his (Christ's) soul*. On the cross Jesus made the heart-rending cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was a complete experience of suffering and was all that God required; he *was satisfied*. *By his knowledge* means the knowledge of the Gospel which Christ was to offer to the world; all who would accept and obey it would be justified or be forgiven of their iniquities. Not that the actions of man can atone for his sins, but by obedience he can obtain the benefit of the sacrifice of Christ because it was for that purpose that he was to *bear their iniquities*.

Verse 12. *Divide with the great and spoil with the strong* is an illustration drawn from the practices of war. An ordinary person could overcome a weak foe and get his belongings. But the power of Christ was to be seen in that he would overcome the great and strong foes and take from them their *spoils* or possessions. *Poured out his soul* has the same meaning as *travail of his soul* in the preceding verse. *Numbered with the transgressors* was fulfilled when Jesus was crucified between the thieves (Mark 15: 27, 28). *Bare the sins of many* is the same as

*bear their iniquities* in the preceding verse. Jesus *made intercession for the transgressors* when he said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34). That dying statement of Christ was verified by Paul in 1 Cor. 2: 8.

## ISAIAH 54

Verse 1. Almost every time some favorable turn comes for ancient Israel the prophet will see something concerning spiritual Israel. A great part of this chapter will deal with the good fortune of the Jews in being restored to their own land and to the favor of their God from whom they were alienated on account of their iniquities. But for a few verses the writer will be dealing with the subject referred to in the first sentence. We do not have to be in any doubt as to the application of this verse for Paul has made the application in Gal. 4: 27. We understand that the subject of that book is the advantages of Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, under Christ. Those advantages are contrasted with the ones of the Jews under Moses. In the progress of his argument the apostle quoted our verse of the present paragraphs. Of course the terms are largely figurative, using the relation of husband and wife for the illustration. Sarah, the barren woman, became finally the mother of many nations. Likewise the church of Christ, composed of both Jews and Gentiles, will bear to God a far greater number of children than all of ancient Israel amounted to.

Verse 2. The thought of the preceding verse is continued in this. It pertains to the extension of favor to all nations of the world and not to the Jews only. That would make it necessary to *enlarge the place of thy tent* so as to make room for the increase of spiritual inhabitants that would be gathered in from the whole earth.

Verse 3. This has the same thought as the foregoing only it is more specific and names the Gentiles as people who were to be benefited by the plan under Christ.

Verse 4. Having "taken time out" from the general subject to give us a glimpse into the time of Christ, the prophet resumes his prediction of the recovery of ancient Israel from captivity. That period is compared to a separation of a wife from her husband in which she would be virtually a



widow. She was to be taken back and her former unfaithfulness not held against her.

Verse 5. This wife had the greatest of all husbands for he was her Maker. He not only was great enough to make or bring into being an institution to serve as his wife, but he is Lord of hosts which means he has control over the vast throngs of living creatures elsewhere in the universe. This husband did not merely say pleasant words to his wife to win her back, but took active interest in the matter of getting her out of her difficulties; he became her *Redeemer*. And so great and evident will be that transaction that he will be recognized as the *God of the whole earth*.

Verse 6. Husband and wife relationship is still the subject, to illustrate that between God and Israel. The wife had been put away in her unfaithfulness and left to grieve for her husband. But the wronged husband will be willing to receive back his wife.

Verse 7. *Small moment* actually will be 70 years so the phrase is figurative or comparative. Israel had been God's people for many centuries so the period of captivity will seem short in comparison. *With great mercies* gather was fulfilled as recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. I believe I should keep the reader reminded as to the date in history for the location of our study. Try to bear in mind that Isaiah completed his writing at least a century before the Babylonian captivity started. Thus it will be understood that all or most of his statements are predictions, though they are past tense in their grammatical form.

Verse 8. This is the same prediction as the preceding verses, referring to the captivity and release therefrom.

Verse 9. The question has been raised as to whether the promise of this verse was contradicted by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. It will not be so considered when the comparison is observed which the Lord made. He referred to the covenant with Noah and then declared that the promise to Israel would be as sure. But the oath to Noah did not say the earth would never again be destroyed; only it was not to be destroyed again by a flood. On the same principle, Israel as a nation intact was never to be taken away again into captivity and it never was. But her downfall through decay (see comments on *root* in ch. 53: 2) would be another matter.

Verse 10. The sense of the language is, "though the mountains shall depart," etc. God's promises to mankind are always reliable.

Verse 11. *Tossed with tempest* is a figurative phrase, likening the experiences of Israel in captivity to a vessel on the sea that is shoved about by the waves and storms, without the help of propeller or rudder. The vessel was finally to be rescued from the raging sea (captivity in Babylon) and towed into the harbor of her own shore. The imagery now changes from that of a wandering vessel to a structure that had been torn down but was to be rebuilt. In reality the prediction is virtually literal for it refers to the rebuilding of the city and buildings at Jerusalem that was to take place after the captivity. The materials named should be regarded rather as figurative, but the fact of rebuilding the structures was to be literal.

Verse 12. This verse has the same meaning as the preceding one with reference to the materials used in the rebuilding carried on in Jerusalem after the captivity.

Verse 13. *All shall be taught* was fulfilled as set forth in Neh. 8: 1-9. It is true that God expected to offer mankind in general the opportunity for learning more about divine truth. That was to be brought to its greatest state of perfection through the era of righteousness that Christ would establish. But this prediction was actually fulfilled as recorded in the passage referred to above.

Verse 14. *In righteousness be established* means that it would be a righteous thing for Israel again to be established in their own land. *Be far from oppression* means they would be entirely released from the oppression of the captivity, and would need have no more fear of a like experience.

Verse 15. The antecedent of *they* is any people who would think to come against Israel after the captivity has been over and the servants of God have been resettled in their own land. *Not by me*. Previously it was the Lord who had caused the nations to come against his people to chastise them. But after the return from captivity that will not be done any more. If such an attempt is made against the land of the Jews it will not be caused by the Lord. *Fall for thy sake* has reference to the protection that God will give for the *sake* of his love toward his

people. The attempts thus made against them will fail through the overruling influence of the Lord.

Verse 16. There is a significant argument in this verse. In forming any attack upon another body of people it would be necessary to have weapons made of metal. But the man who knows how to make those weapons obtained that ability from his Creator. Certainly such a smith would not have any more knowledge or ability for making the weapons than has the One who gave such talents to him. And if God can enable one man to form such tools he certainly can enable another to make weapons to oppose them.

Verse 17. On the basis of the truths set forth in the preceding verse, the people of God are given the assurance of this verse. If any man uses his God-given talent to form weapons of war intended to be used against the Lord's people, then surely He will enable his own servants to resist such force with like force. There might be occasions when the enemy will attempt such an action and for a time will seem to prosper, but all such attempts will finally be overcome. A noted instance of just such an attempt is recorded in history. A wicked man named Epiphanes started an armed attack on the institutions of the Jews and appeared to be successful until a valiant group of God's people took up arms and put down the invader. I shall quote some history for the information of the reader which is as follows: "Mattathias and Judas Maccabaeus supported the distressed nation [of Israel], and the almost universally abandoned religion, with so small a number of forces, that we can consider the success which the Almighty gave their arms no otherwise than a miracle. The troops grew more numerous by degrees, and afterwards formed a very considerable body." ROLLIN, Vol. 4, page 242. "At this time Judas Maccabaeus, with some others that accompanied him, fled into the wilderness, and there lived in great hardship, subsisting themselves upon herbs, and what else the mountains and woods could afford them, till they gained an opportunity of taking up arms for themselves and their country as will be hereafter related." PRIDEAUX, year 168. "These measures [of Epiphanes] induced an open revolt, whose leader was the priest and patriot Mattathias. His bold deed of the public murder of a royal official was the sign

for the beginning of the revolt. Fleeing to the mountains, he, with the co-operation of his five heroic sons, organized war on a small scale. He died 166 B.C." SCHAFF-HERZOG, Article, Maccabees. We thus have a well authenticated account in history of an arming against God's people that was brought to defeat. Of course the tongue that rose against the Jews was likewise put to shame. Epiphanes used some vile language against the Jews, but he was finally subdued and his career ended in his own disgrace. There will be more predictions and history concerning this wicked man to be considered when we come to the study of the book of Daniel. But for the present it is sufficient to observe the complete fulfilling of this part of Isaiah's interesting book of prophecy.

### ISAIAH 55

Verse 1. The leading thought running through this entire chapter is a prediction of the benefits to be had under Christ in the centuries to come. See the comments on Ch. 54: 1 with regard to the occasions when the prophet goes from ancient or fleshly Israel to spiritual Israel. That chapter deals mostly with the improved conditions that would come to fleshly Israel after being brought from the captivity. But all of this book was written a century or more before the captivity even began. Hence the exhortations to repentance in this chapter were made to the people of Israel right at the time when it had been declared by the Lord that nothing could be done to help matters; that the nation had to go into captivity. The apparent contradiction is explained in the long note written at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of this COMMENTARY. However, the prophet has the subject of spiritual benefits in general before him, especially as they will be offered to mankind under Christ. It will be from that viewpoint the several verses will be commented upon in their order. *Ho* is an interjection to secure close attention. *Waters* is figurative and refers to the spiritual blessings to be obtained from the Lord. It is one of the most common figures in the whole Bible because literal water fills so great a place in the needs of living beings. *Wine* and *milk* also are used figuratively for the same purpose as *waters*, applying to the provisions of spiritual life under God's favors. *Without price* does not mean that a man will not be required to contribute anything for the benefits of

salvation. It means that no material possessions of man could purchase salvation, but it will be possible to obtain it through the favor of Christ for those who obey him.

Verse 2. The contrast between spiritual and material food is the main idea in this verse. Men will devote their time and energies to obtain the temporal things of life, when those things are to be destroyed as soon as this world is brought to an end (1 Cor. 6: 12, 13). If they would devote themselves to the service of Christ, they would receive that kind of meat and drink that would never fail but would sustain them unto the life eternal after earthly things have ceased to be.

Verse 3. *Mercies* is from a word that means "kindness," and the expression means that Christ was to bestow the kindness that had been given to David, and promised through him to the world. (See Psa. 89: 1, 28.) Christ was a lineal descendant of David and many things that are said of Christ are spoken of as from his noted ancestor.

Verse 4. It seems that both David and Christ are in the mind of the prophet, or, that what is said could be regarded as applying to either of them. That is not strange because the Bible frequently refers to the two great persons in a common relationship. David was the first king in the blood line of Christ, and he was the ancestor of Christ on both sides of his parentage. But in a more direct and personal sense God decreed to give Christ *for a witness to the people*, and he also was to be their commander. This was fulfilled after he conquered the grave and appeared alive to his apostles whom he had chosen before death. He then declared that all power (command) was given to him in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28: 18).

Verse 5. This verse is a prediction of the call of the Gentiles under the reign of Christ. Under the Mosaic system Christ *knew not* the Gentiles and they *knew not* him. *He hath glorified thee* means God hath glorified his Son Jesus to have all this honor and power. This was testified to in those very words in Acts 3: 13.

Verse 6. This verse says *while he may be found* and Jesus said *he that seeketh findeth* (Matt. 7: 8). We do not believe the Bible contradicts itself, but that all apparent difficulties of that kind may have a satisfactory explanation. The word *found* is from MATSA and Strong defines it, "to attain or

acquire." The Lord has always made his promises of favor conditional. If a man ignores the opportunities of obtaining the favor of God until his circumstances make it impossible to comply with the conditions, then it will be too late for him to "attain or acquire" the Lord's blessings. The word *near* is to be understood in the same sense as *found*. But it should be observed that in order to obtain the Lord even under the proper conditions it is necessary for man to *seek* and *call*. God has done all that he will or that needs to be done for human salvation until man makes the next move.

Verse 7. Forsake means to let go of, not merely ease up in the practice of that which is evil. Not only must all outward actions be abandoned but unrighteous thoughts must be forsaken. There is abundant reason for this as many passages in both the Old and New Testaments teach. (See Psa. 19: 14; Pr. 15: 26; Matt. 15: 19; Acts 8: 22; Phil. 4: 8.) But even all of this reformation in the individual sinner is not enough to obtain the favor of God. He was the one who got away from God by his sins and he is the one who must come back. *Have mercy upon him*, not hand over to him what strict justice would allow, for it is the mercy of God that makes it possible for man to hope for salvation. *Our God* is significant in view of the many false gods that were worshiped in those days. The sinner must not turn to the gods of the Egyptians or Babylonians or Canaanites, but to the God of Israel; to *our God*. *Abundantly pardon* means full and unreserved for all the sins. God does not give his pardon for sins in degrees or installments. If a sinner has not complied fully with the divine terms of pardon God will not forgive at all.

Verses 8, 9. I believe these two verses should be in one bracket to get the clearest understanding of the very important subject. *Thoughts* is rendered "plans" in some versions. The lexicon gives "intentions" as part of the definition of the original Hebrew. But either rendering will leave the meaning of the passage the same. We just learned that a man's outward actions are affected by his thoughts, so either of the words meets the point the Lord was making. The difference between the thoughts of God and man is compared to that between heaven and earth. If the thoughts of God are that much higher than those of man, then if those thoughts had been put in lan-

guage correspondingly high when addressed to earthly beings, no man could have understood what was being said. That is why Paul said he spoke after the manner of men. It was because of the infirmity of the flesh; that is, because fleshly man is too far inferior to God to comprehend any but human speech (Rom. 6: 19).

Verse 10. This verse refers to the regularity and success of the processes of nature as regards temporal results. It is an argument to show that God's plans always work as he expects as far as he has to do with them.

Verse 11. Having laid the foundation for the argument on the success of the Lord's plans in nature, the same principle is affirmed to hold good in the effects of the word that is sent forth from his mouth. This verse has been misused by many well-meaning persons. The passage is made to mean that in every case where the word of God is preached it is bound to result in obedience of those who hear it. That conclusion cannot be drawn from this verse for it makes no such declaration. It only affirms that it will accomplish what the Lord expects it to accomplish. A clear passage for this purpose is in 2 Cor. 2: 15, 16 which I request the student to read carefully. That passage from the apostle Paul teaches that God's word has a twofold object in view; to save the obedient and to condemn the disobedient. It is bound to do one or the other, and whichever it does it will bring about the result indicated by our present verse.

Verse 12. When fleshly Israel went out of captivity there was general rejoicing or a feeling of congratulation. But in a more important sense, when men accept Christ and are released from their captivity in sin, there is great happiness for all concerned. Mountains, hills and trees are used figuratively because they represent the principal parts of a country.

Verse 13. The figurative line of thought is continued in this verse. It shows the improved condition of all who will accept the provisions of mercy that Christ has to offer to the world. Thorns and briars are unsightly and destructive. A fir tree is useful as well as pleasant to the sight, and a myrtle tree is especially adapted to the use of ornamentation. These terms are the prophet's way of picturing some of the good results for men who will accept the word of Christ.

## ISAIAH 56

Verse 1. Isaiah did all of his writing more than a century before the Babylonian captivity started. But the people were told many times that after that period was over they would be permitted to return to their home land. In the meantime they were exhorted to make personal amends and correct their individual errors. And, as usual, the exhortations and promises were of such a character that they would apply to people and circumstances in the time of Christ. These remarks are offered as comments on this verse, also to apply in general to many following verses.

Verse 2. Mention of the sabbath does not prevent this exhortation from applying to men in the time of Christ. At the time the prophet was writing it the law of Moses was in force and the violation of the sabbath law was a prevailing iniquity. But the same principle holds good concerning the law of Christ. The man who will keep His commandments will be *blessed* as surely as did the one who kept the sabbath under Moses.

Verse 3. Figurative language is based on some literal fact for its form of speech even though the application is different. Under the Mosaic system a *stranger* (foreigner) or eunuch was not admitted to the advantages of the system. It will not be so under Christ, but all ranks of mankind will have the same privileges of the Gospel.

Verse 4. *Eunuchs* and *sabbaths* are again used figuratively, the point being that under Christ all grades and classes of men will be invited to serve alike.

Verse 5. If these men will serve Christ faithfully they will receive blessings that will far outshine those that had been denied eunuchs under the Mosaic system.

Verse 6. Doubtless the prophet has the call of the Gentiles especially in mind in these verses. We know they were considered strangers in the time of the Mosaic law according to the language of Paul in Eph. 2: 12, 19. These were to be admitted to the privileges and expected to obey the commandments of Christ the same as the Jews.

Verse 7. *Mountains* in symbolic language means governments and institutions of power. This verse is a prediction that the Gentiles were to be invited to come into the government or kingdom of Christ. There will not be any literal sacrifices in that service,



but using the terms of the old system for the figures, the prediction is that the nations will be accepted in their spiritual offerings to Christ. *Mine house shall be called an house of prayer* was quoted by Christ in Matt. 21: 13, and that was while the Mosaic system was in force. This might seem to conflict with the idea that the passage we are studying is a prediction of the Gospel epoch. But such is not the case for there are some truths or principles that are always valid. Jesus knew it was taught that the house of God (meaning the temple in Jerusalem) was to be used in a respectful manner from its beginning; he therefore knew that the Jews were violating that divine purpose. But that did not prevent the prophet from predicting a time when the Lord's house would be a house of prayer for all people. The last three words are the key to the passage, and identify it as a prediction of the call of the Gentiles. Of course when the time comes for fulfillment of this particular part of the prophecy, the house of the Lord will be the church that was started in Jerusalem, the same city in which the Jews had their material house of God.

Verse 8. In this one short verse will be found predictions of two separate operations of the Lord that were to be hundreds of years apart. The first is the return of the people of Israel from captivity. This is the literal meaning of *gathereth the outcasts of Israel*. *Gather others to him* refers to the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of Christ with the same privileges as those enjoyed by the Jews.

Verse 9. This verse is highly figurative and refers to the use God was going to make of the heathen kings in chastising the corrupt leaders of his nation. These heathen men (such as the Babylonians) were the *beasts of the field*.

Verse 10. All through the study we have seen that God was chiefly moved with wrath against the leaders of his nation. They had abused their position of power to mislead the common people and cause them to commit iniquity like the idolatrous people about them. The Lord had often warned of what he would do to his nation as punishment for its corruptions. He had told them through the prophets that at last the heathen forces would be brought against Jerusalem, and that they would take it under control. But these selfish leaders refused to be admonished by the warnings and continued in their

unlawful way of life. In this situation they were compared to *watchmen* who were blind to the threatening conditions, and to *dumb dogs* that failed to bark at the approach of the wolves that were coming to attack the flock.

Verse 11. The comparison is continued in this verse. The leaders are likened to watch dogs that are so greedy that they are interested only in satisfying their ravenous appetite of watching out for the appearance of an enemy. They are also compared to shepherds who are as selfish as their watch dogs and who are always looking after the interests of *their own way*, seeking always for their own gain.

Verse 12. This verse repeats what these selfish leaders would be saying among themselves regarding their extravagant way of living. They proposed to procure wine and other luxuries and consume them in their own selfish manners. *Tomorrow shall be as this day* portrays a very corrupt thought. It is always bad to practice the things that are connected with fleshly extravagance, but it makes it worse when such a life is deliberately planned for the future as these wicked leaders did. Their conduct was bound to be corrupt when the expressed intentions were already headed that way.

## ISAIAH 57

Verse 1. The subject of the preceding chapter is continued over into this. The selfish leaders took advantage of the people under them and caused many of them to perish. *No man layeth it to heart* refers to the cruelty of these leading men among the priests and prophets who had become corrupted by their own selfish purposes. That cruelty will be described in more detail in the study of the next chapter.

Verse 2. When a righteous man perishes through the cruelty of the wicked, he is not the loser in the end. By being taken away in his upright life he thereby misses the evil and trouble that is awaiting the wicked who are left in the land of the living and who had been responsible for the tragic end of the innocent one's life.

Verse 3. *Draw near* is a call to attention for the wicked characters in the nation who have been abusing the helpless common men and women. These persons were the descendants of the vilest of creatures and were imitating their ancestors.

Verse 4. These wicked men intended their oppressions to affect the unfor-

fortunate ones subject to them only. The question asked them by the prophet implies that God was the actual target for their misdoings and He would finally bring them to justice.

Verse 5. This verse describes some of the worst of the idolaters among the people of Israel. Some of them even offered their children in sacrifice to the idols, and the altars were built in valleys and under cliffs of rocks.

Verse 6. These idolaters would gather the stones that were worn smooth by the current of the stream. These were not permanent rivers or it would have been very difficult if not impossible to obtain the stones. Strong defines the original word to mean a winter torrent. In that way the stones would become smooth by the wearing of the water during the wet season, then dry up at other times so that men could descend into the bed of the stream and get the stones. With these the idolaters would erect their altars and on them make offerings to the false gods. *Should I receive comfort in these?* This clause means the same as if it said: "Do you think I will put up with such conduct and not punish you for it?"

Verse 7. *Bed* is from MISHKAB, which Strong defines, "a bed (figuratively a bier); abstractly, sleep; by euphemism [substitution of a milder word] carnal intercourse." Throughout the Bible the sin of idolatry is likened to unfaithfulness in the marriage relation. The *bed* here then means this altar for the service of idolatry which would be compared to adultery against the marriage bed. The Jews chose many of the mountains as places for their idols, and altars were erected in front of them.

Verse 8. Unfaithfulness in marriage is still the illustration. (See the comments on the preceding verse.) When a Jew who was in love with the idols of the heathen people would see one of the images it would stir him into the service connected with it. Such a fact is illustrated by a woman who is inclined toward immoral practices. She will prepare her own bed for the use of her lovers wherever she can find a suitable place. *Where thou sleepest it is rendered "thou providest room" in the margin and the ASV agrees with it. Sleepest is from CHAZAH and Strong's definition is, "A primitive root; to gaze at; mentally to perceive, contemplate (with pleasure); specifically to have a vision of." The passage means that the unfaithful wife was even picturing in*

her mind the vision of her bed to be occupied jointly with her by one who was not her husband. Such conduct actually takes place frequently in the social world, but it is used in this place to compare the religious unfaithfulness of the nation of Israel that is considered as the wife of the Lord.

Verse 9. This unfaithful wife even planned to entice the king. To make herself the more alluring to him she used *ointment* and *perfumes* on her body. We might wonder why these bodily dainties are mentioned in this connection, but it is because of the effect they have in stimulating the emotional nerves of a man. A very noted doctor and psychologist, member of the faculty of a modern educational institution, says this on the subject: "A perfumed girl is likely to be a greater mental stimulus for the erotic feelings," etc. Again let us remember the prophet is using these strong emotions and actions in the literal world to illustrate the zeal with which the unfaithful Israelites went after idols.

Verse 10. Israel wore herself out with her extreme activities on behalf of the idols yet would not give up and admit it was all hopeless. After a slight pause she would feel somewhat revived and then would renew her idolatrous practices. *Wast not grieved* means she was not worried in conscience over her unfaithfulness to God.

Verse 11. An unfaithful wife often makes up excuses or "explanations" for her conduct, but such tales generally prove to be lies. God asks his unfaithful wife whom she fears. She cannot claim it is her rightful husband seeing she *had not remembered* nor regarded him. The statement is then made that the wife had thus mistreated her patient husband just because he had not been making any complaint; he had *held his peace*. Such is the weakness of humanity, that if he is suffered to go on unpunished in his sin, he will take advantage of it to sin all the more. (See Ecclesiastes 8: 11.) And so this unfaithful wife went on and on in her unrighteous life without any pain of conscience for the sake of her true husband whom she had wronged.

Verse 12. One word in Strong's definition of the original for *declare* is "expose," and another is "explain." The verse means God would expose the pretended righteousness of these unfaithful people of his. Even the things they did that should have been according to divine law were done for

the wrong purpose and hence were rejected.

Verse 13. *Companies* refers to the group of idols they had been worshipping. When times of distress came upon the idolatrous Jews they would wish for help from God. But they were told to cry unto their idols for help which was an appropriate suggestion. If the idols were good enough to be worshiped in times of prosperity, they should be the proper source of help in times of adversity. But the prophet gave them to understand that their idols would do them no good. *Wind shall carry them all away* is a figurative way of showing how light and useless the idols were. On the other hand, the man who trusts the Lord has the assurance of favor from God.

Verse 14. *Cast ye up* is a prediction of the return from captivity and the restoration of the country. *Take up the stumblingblock* means practically the same as the first of the verse. The Babylonians had interrupted the progress of the nation of Israel, but at the end of their period of control they were to be removed and no more be a hindrance to the people of God.

Verse 15. This verse states the truths and general principles on which God always deals with man, whether his ancient people or with man in any age. The dignity of the Creator contrasted with the weakness and dependency of man is set forth in the passage. But it should be noted while studying the verse that man's helpless condition is no hindrance to his receiving the attention and favor of God if he is of the proper frame of mind. Let us consider the leading terms of this unusual verse. *Inhabiteth* is from *SHAKAN* and Strong defines it, "a primitive root . . . to reside or permanently stay." *Eternity* is from *AD* and the leading word in Strong's definition is "duration," without any specification as to whether it may be long or short. The word has practically the same meaning as the word "time." The popular notion is that the Bible considers the duration before the judgment day as "time" and after that it is "eternity." But it makes no such distinction and as far as the Bible is concerned "time" simply means duration, and consequently there has always been duration and always will be. Therefore it is not correct to speak of the "end of time," because "time" as a distinction from "eternity" will never end. To sum up this particular part of the subject, time had no beginning and

will have no end. The phrase of our verse means that God permanently occupies duration. That is another way of saying that He never had a beginning and will have no end. Certainly, then, such a Being has the right to expect the proper respect from man who is the creature of the endless Creator. *Dwell* is from the same word as *inhabiteth*, so the verse means that while God inhabits or occupies all duration, yet he will admit certain ones to come and dwell with him, the ones to be described yet in this verse. *Contrite* and *humble* mean practically the same thing in the original, which is to be crushed or bowed down. If a man comes to realize his unworthiness and the greatness of his sins, and is completely humiliated by it, he is then in a state of mind to be received favorably by the Lord.

Verse 16. This verse teaches that God does not go to extremes. He will contend or accuse as long as it is necessary, but he will not hold out in his wrath indefinitely. The reason for thus limiting the divine wrath is that *the spirit should fail*.

Verse 17. The cause is stated for bringing chastisement upon the Lord's people which was the *iniquity of his covetousness*. This was especially true of the leaders who oppressed the poor in order to enrich their own possessions. (See the comments at ch. 58: 3). *I hid me* is a prediction of the period of the captivity when God turned his face against his disobedient nation. This bitter punishment was necessary because they went on *frowardly*, which means in a contrary and backsliding manner.

Verse 18. This verse describes the principles on which God deals generally with man. He has *seen* and thus knows all about his ways or manner of life and is always ready to rescue him whenever he complies with the terms. In a special manner, however, this is a prediction of Israel concerning the national sin of idolatry. God beheld all of that distressing history and decreed to punish the nation with the captivity. The prediction further promises that God *will heal him*. This cure from idolatry was accomplished by the bondage in Babylon, and the fulfillment of it has been verified by the history as per the quotation in connection with ch. 1: 25.

Verse 19. The particular *fruit of the lips* referred to here is the word *peace*. *I create* means that the lips of man cannot truthfully speak of peace except

as God authorizes them so to speak. *Far off* and *near* has a general sense of meaning all the grades and classes of man. Its special sense is the prediction that the favors of the Lord were to be offered to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. (See Eph. 2: 17.)

Verse 20. When the sea is calm its waters are clear and pure. When it is stirred up it throws out various kinds of waste matter. This is used to illustrate the fruits of a wicked life that is agitated by the turmoil and strife of worldliness.

Verse 21. This verse should be considered in connection with verse 19. God does not authorize the lips of a wicked man to speak of peace, therefore we have the statement here that such a character can have no peace.

### ISAIAH 58

Verse 1. The date of this writing is at least a century before the Babylonian captivity and thus was while the nation was in the midst of the corrupt practices complained of. God is instructing the prophet to preach against the people in severe terms. *Cry aloud* is from original words that literally mean to speak out with a strong voice against the evil doers. *Spare not* means not to be restrained in his denunciations against that guilty people so they will realize the greatness of their transgressions against the God who had been so gracious toward them.

Verse 2. This verse will be the better understood by remembering it is a description of the religious activities of the Jews as they appeared outwardly or as they wanted them to appear. A companion passage is in Jer. 3: 10 where the Lord said that Judah had turned to him "feignedly" which means in pretense. From this verse through verse 7 should form a bracket and the subject as a whole is the outward, insincere practices of the nation and particularly those of the leaders. The reader should consult the note that was given in connection with comments at ch. 1: 10.

Verse 3. The previous verse showed God speaking and describing the religious activities of Israel which they were doing insincerely. This verse shows the people doing the talking and giving an account of their doings. They are complaining that the Lord does not recognize them in their practices. But they are told why it is that the Lord does not accept them in what they are pretending to be a true devotion. Fasting was not generally com-

manded under the Mosaic system but it was permitted and when properly performed was blessed. But these people were pretending to be going through a period of fasting and *afflicting their souls*. The last phrase means to be having a time of great humility and sorrow for their unworthiness. Such conduct would have been appropriate for people who had so often been guilty of wrong-doing. This was especially true of the leaders who had been so cruel toward their poor and unfortunate subjects. When a man is going through a season of sincere penitence he is all the more kindly toward his fellowman, but these leaders were not doing that way. While they were pretending to be penalizing themselves for their past luxurious living, they were being cruel and hardhearted against their unfortunate brethren. At the very time they were pretending to be feeling depressed for their sins they were enjoying themselves and *finding pleasure*. *Exact* is from *MAGAS* and Strong defines it, "To drive (an animal, a workman, a debtor, an army) by implication to tax, harass, tyrannize." *Labors* is from *ATSEB*, which Strong defines, "A (hired) workman," so the meaning of the sentence is clear. At the very time these leaders were pretending to be having a period of humbleness and softheartedness, they were overworking their hired laborers and using harsh measures to collect from their brethren who were indebted to them. Of course the Lord would not recognize the pretended sacrifices of these leaders when he knew they were only done as a cloak for their unrighteous dealings against their poor brethren. In connection with these remarks I request the student to read Ezk. 34: 2, 3; Amos 6: 1-6.

Verse 4. Actual fasting will cause a man to feel some bodily discomfort. This feeling will be endured uncomplainingly if it is done sincerely. On the other hand, if it is merely for a cloak, it will render him ill-tempered and he may "take his spite out" on some innocent "bystander." It was having just that effect on these wicked leaders which is the meaning of *fast for strife* and *smite with the fist*. As long as they conducted their fast as they were doing then, their voice would not be *heard on high* or be heard by the Lord of heaven and earth.

Verse 5. The Lord asks in an accusing manner if it is a day or time for them to be putting on such a fast as they were doing. One that consisted



only in an outward show of punishment or restrictions on their body as to the enjoyments of life.

Verse 6. If a man appears to be going through restrictions against his own body but at the same time makes others "pay for it," he will receive no credit from the Lord. This was no time for them to be depending upon the outward ritualistic performances, when their unfortunate brethren were undergoing such restrictions forcibly to the advantage of these hypocritical leaders. At such a time the appropriate kind of *fast* would be such as now will be described. First to cease their own practices of *wickedness*, then to lighten the burdens of their brethren that were so heavy.

Verse 7. If they not only abstained from bread for themselves, but dealt it out to the hungry who had been going through an enforced fast, then their practice would show evidence of being sincere. The rest of the verse is along the same line of thought. We may see a similar teaching in James 2: 15, 16.

Verse 8. *Then* means that if they would perform the kind of "fast" as the two preceding verses describe they would obtain the favor of God. Their influence would be compared to the morning light that betokens a day of joy and gladness for the oppressed. They would then receive the glory of the Lord as their reward or general guard, as that obsolete word signifies.

Verse 9. This verse describes the opposite of what is set forth in the preceding ones. Instead of the frown of disapproval from the Lord, he would hear and answer the call of his servants. Instead of increasing the hardships of their subjects they would take the yoke of servitude away. *Speaking vanity* means to say things that are not true and that will come to nought. The reason their speech was considered in this light is that it was influenced by their devotion to idols.

Verse 10. For the comments appropriate to this verse see those on vs. 6, 7 above.

Verse 11. These terms are all used to describe the prosperous state that will come to the man who will conduct himself in a way pleasing to God. Most of the words are used figuratively because they pertain to the blessings generally that the Lord promises to bestow upon men and women who conduct themselves righteously.

Verse 12. This verse could have a

literal as well as spiritual application. It was true that after the return from the captivity the nation of Israel was permitted to rebuild its city and other places of the country that had been destroyed.

Verse 13. *Turn away from the sabbath* is explained by the words that will soon follow; *doing thy pleasure on my holy day*. It means that if they will cease using the sabbath as a day for their own pleasure, but will delight in it as the holy day of the Lord, then they will be doing that which is right.

Verse 14. If the people will do as the preceding verse outlines, then they will be delighted in what they will receive of the Lord. *Heritage of Jacob* means the good things the Lord had promised to Jacob and the people descending from him.

## ISAIAH 59

Verse 1. At the time the prophet was writing this the people of Israel were actually enjoying many of the good things of life and hence were really in possession of the fortunes that their position in the world made possible. But we should remember that Isaiah was writing of some things that were to take place a century or more in the future. At that time the nation will be in captivity and it will seem that the Lord's hand had failed. But this verse declares that the hand of the Lord had not become short or reduced, neither had his ear lost its ability to hear.

Verse 2. This verse explains the preceding one. The people will be without the help of their God but it will be their own fault. Their own iniquities will have caused the separation between them and Him. (See ch. 50: 1.)

Verse 3. The leaders of the nation were the ones especially meant in this accusation. (See comments on ch. 58: 3.) They were using their position of authority and other advantages to benefit their own interests. In carrying out this wicked practice they abused the common people and sometimes even caused them to lose their lives. When called upon to explain their acts they built up excuses and resorted to lies.

Verse 4. The outstanding men in the Jewish nation were guilty of these iniquities. They had about lost all regard for God's truth, and when an unfortunate brother was crying for help from oppression he was ignored.

Verse 5. This verse is figurative and describes the schemes and dark plots that were formed against the victims. A *cockatrice* is a poisonous snake and it is used to illustrate the deadly effect these wicked leaders were having upon the common people. A *spider* will entangle its victim in its web and render it helpless. This is also used for comparison purposes and is applied to the unfair treatment these corrupt leaders heaped upon the people under them. *Their eggs* means the eggs of the cockatrice but applies to the plots of the leaders; all who "fall" for such will be destroyed.

Verse 6. *Webs shall not become garments* means the schemes that are concocted by these corrupt men will not cover their wickedness any more than a web would hide a person's body. *Violence* may be either physical or otherwise. The priests and prophets had become so covetous and thirsty for power and special privilege that they wronged the people out of their rightful possessions. To cover up this crookedness they perverted the scripture to make it support their evil practices.

Verse 7. *Run to evil* indicates a tendency toward evil and *haste to shed innocent blood* means they are so eager to shed blood that they will not investigate first. It is well to take note of the phrase *innocent blood*. Not all deaths are alike, and if a man is slain as a punishment for murder that would be the shedding of *guilty blood*. Such execution was commanded by the Lord in Gen. 9: 6 and has never been repealed.

Verse 8. Peace based on principles of right is what these corrupt men did not know; that is, they would not recognize it. They were so bent on carrying out their own interests that all rights of others were trampled upon. *No judgment in their goings* denotes the utter disregard these people would show for the rights of others. A *crooked path* is hard to follow and by laying out such a road for their subjects to travel they would hope to get them confused. Such a condition would give an opportunity for preying upon the victims and robbing them of their goods and other rights.

Verse 9. Up to this verse the prophet has been speaking on God's part directly to the Jews and thus was using the second person. Now he speaks in the first person and makes the people of his nation complain and hence acknowledge their own iniquities and

the just consequences. For a number of verses this grammatical form of person will be used. *Therefore* introduces conclusions to be drawn from the truths stated in the preceding verses. Among the sad results of their corrupt doings is their inability to get any justice done even when they might have had a just complaint had they been worthy. Of course many of the expressions are to be understood figuratively, the point to be observed being the contrast between the terms used. *Light* and *obscurity* are opposite terms and so are *brightness* and *darkness*. The illustrations are intended to show the disappointing results of living in such a manner as to lose the favor and other assistance from God.

Verse 10. *Grope* means to search by feeling and such an act would be necessary either because the light had been shut off or the person was blind. Both effects had come upon these people because of their departures from God. If one had been deprived of his eyesight he would be as helpless at noon as at midnight. Their life had become as desolate as if they had died.

Verse 11. To *roar* means to complain so heavily that it is like the voice of *bears*, at the same time it has the note of despair that is compared to the sound of *doves*. *Judgment* and *salvation* are used in the same sense as "judgment" and "justice" in verse 9.

Verse 12. This verse is a confession by the people of Israel. The significant words *before thee* means that the Lord knows all about what they had been doing. *Sins testify* denotes a self-accusing conscience and an acknowledgement that all the charges that are being made against them by the Lord through his prophet are true. *Transgressions are with us* is a candid admission that none but themselves could be blamed for their undone conditions. *We know them* signifies that they could not plead ignorance as an explanation for their past record of wrong-doing.

Verse 13. This is a continuation of the acknowledgment in the preceding verse. It is significant to observe that *lying against the Lord* and *departing away from our God* are named together as if they mean the same. That is true, for when a man forsakes the way which the Lord has pointed out for him to travel he thereby implies that the Lord's way is wrong which would be a falsehood against Him.

Verse 14. *Backward* and *far off* are terms used for the purpose of emphasis

meaning that these favors had come to be out of reach of them. *Street* is from a word whose outstanding meaning is any place of much room. The point in the figure of speech is that truth had been let down publicly and then abandoned. *Equity* means fairness which was a quality that was not welcomed by these corrupt leaders.

Verse 15. *Maketh himself a prey* means that the man who dared try to do right would only expose himself to the anger of the mob of evil doers. All of this wicked practice was seen by the Lord and hence he decreed some punishment should come to them.

Verse 16. The pronoun *he* refers to the Lord whose name was used in the close of the preceding verse. In that place it expressly says that the Lord *saw* the corrupt condition of his people and was displeased. The subject is not changed in this verse except to make the situation look still darker. *No man . . . no intercessor* means the Lord saw there was no one in the nation upon whom he could depend. We understand all these remarks could be applied spiritually to the necessity for some one besides mere man to bring salvation to the world. But the direct sense of the verse is that God would have to take over the whole case and work out some plan that would result in the national salvation of his people. That plan will include first the captivity of the nation and that to be followed by the overthrow of the enemy and return of Israel to her native land. *Righteousness sustained him* indicates the above plan for the sake of the nation of Israel will be the right one.

Verse 17. These military or protective terms are used figuratively and still apply to the righteousness of the Lord's plan on behalf of his people Israel.

Verse 18. From this verse to the close of the chapter is a bracket dealing with the overthrow of the Babylonians by the Persians. That event was to end the captivity and permit Israel to return to Jerusalem. Babylon took too much personal satisfaction out of the chastisement of Israel and that displeased the Lord. *Fury to his adversaries* is a prediction of the severe experience that Babylon was destined to suffer for her harsh treatment of the Jews. The historical fulfillment of this prophecy may be seen in connection with the comments on ch. 13: 1.

Verse 19. *West and rising of the sun*

are opposite terms and are used to indicate the general recognition that will be given to the revolutionary change from Babylonian to Persian domination of the world. *Come in like a flood* refers to the sudden and complete overthrow of Babylon which will be seen in the historical quotation referred to above. *Lift up a standard against him* refers to the Persian forces that God would bring against the Babylonians.

Verse 20. The *Redeemer* refers to the Lord who was to overrule the oppression caused by the Babylonians. That would release Israel so she could again return to Zion or Jerusalem which was the capital of the nation.

Verse 21. The prediction of the overthrow of Babylon and restoration of Israel was to be regarded as a covenant between the Lord and his people. But the covenant was not to be limited to the mere deliverance from the captivity. God promised to give his people divine instruction that would be continued through the present generation and handed on down to their descendants.

## ISAIAH 60

General remarks. It should be observed on this chapter that the prophet often speaks of Israel and the church as if they were one, or that the one was a continuation of the other. Hence, some things he says will apply to either or both. Sometimes they apply to both in the same sense, while at other times they apply in a literal sense to one and in a figurative or spiritual sense to the other. I shall insist that the reader carefully study this note, and also make frequent reference to it as he follows through the comments on the various verses in their order.

Verse 1. This verse logically follows the subject matter in the closing verses of the preceding chapter. After the Babylonian Empire was overcome, its successor, the Medo-Persian Empire, was friendly toward the people of Israel and gave them permission to return to their native land, which is the event predicted in this verse.

Verse 2. The thought here is as if it said *though the darkness shall cover the earth*, etc., yet the Lord will be strong enough to lift his people out of it and let his light brighten their national life.

Verse 3. *Gentiles* is from a word that is sometimes rendered "nations" and "peoples," and it was true that many foreign people showed a favorable atti-

tude toward Israel after the captivity. (See the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.) However, that was always the case to some extent at certain times. But the prophet evidently got a view of the time of Christ in this verse and in a number of verses following. Under the system that Christ gave to the world all the Gentiles were admitted to its benefits and privileges. The form of language indicates the prediction was made as a favor or honor bestowed upon Israel since we have such terms as *thy light* and *thy rising*. But that is all very consistent because Christ came through the Jewish nation.

Verse 4. This verse evidently is a prediction of the call of the Gentiles. The words *from far* would especially suggest such an interpretation in view of a like expression in Eph. 2: 13, 17. *Nursed at thy side* is a figure of speech to indicate the affectionate relationship that was to come between the Jews and Gentiles under Christ.

Verse 5. *Flow together* has the same significance as the expression just commented upon in the preceding verse. *Sea* and such like terms in symbolic language has reference to multitudes of people. *Forces of the Gentiles* is a direct prediction that Christ would give a system of religion to the world that would admit the Gentiles on the same footing as that extended to the Jews.

Verse 6. *Camels and dromedaries* are used figuratively because such animals were a means of travel commonly used in ancient times. The nations are predicted to be going to Zion to recognize and enjoy the benefits offered, and their usual mode of travel would naturally be considered in the figures. *Midian* and *Sheba* were among the nations of the Gentiles and they are represented as bringing of their possessions to contribute to the support of Israel. Their motive in bringing this wealth is signified by the words *show forth the praises of the Lord*.

Verse 7. *Kedar* and *Nebaioth* were tribes of the descendants of Ishmael, and are named among the Gentiles as those who would come to the support and enjoyment of Israel. *Come up with acceptance* is a prediction of the invitation for the Gentiles to be partakers of the blessings through Christ or spiritual Israel. (See Acts 11: 13; Eph. 2: 13, 17.)

Verse 8. Flying clouds and doves are illustrative of the gathering of human beings toward the great pro-

visions made by Christ. However, the subject matter is such that we may also think of the return of good fortune for fleshly Israel after the captivity. It is well that we not lose sight of that phase of the text, for it will be still more evident in other verses.

Verse 9. *Isles* is from an original that means the inhabited spots, and *watt* means to rely upon the Lord of Israel. *Ships of Tarshish* is a figurative reference to the same facts already predicted a number of times, the contributions of the nations to the institution of the Lord. This may be applied either to ancient Israel in a temporal sense or to spiritual Israel under the system given by Christ.

Verse 10. The prophet now comes more specifically to the case of ancient Israel as far as the unfavorable experiences are concerned. He is writing of the captivity that was to be brought upon them a little over a century later. *In my wrath I smote thee* is specifically a prediction of the event of the captivity and its cause is stated to be the wrath of God. But Ex. 20: 5 will indicate to us the basis of that wrath which is the divine jealousy over the idol gods that Israel had been serving. And in the same sentence the favor of God also is predicted which was fulfilled by the return from captivity after being released by the Persians.

Verse 11. This verse may properly be applied to both modern and ancient Israel. It was true that the gates of Jerusalem were thrown open freely after the return from exile in Babylon, but the more significant fulfillment was to consist in the extended provision in favor of the world in general. The rest of the verse has direct reference to the call of the Gentiles. *Forces of the Gentiles* means that these people would bring their wealth and activities to the support of the cause of truth that the Jewish nation would offer to the world through Christ.

Verse 12. To a great extent this verse was true of the worldly nations that Israel of old had to deal with. But it was to be more emphatically true spiritually, for Christ was to come into the world through the Jewish race and he would call upon all mankind to hear him. It is here predicted that any nation that would not respond favorably would be *utterly wasted*. The same prediction was made by Moses and the noted passage is in Deut. 18: 18-20 which the student should carefully read.



Verse 13. This entire verse is one of figures used to illustrate the grandeur to be brought to Israel by the Lord, and again the prediction may be applied to both fleshly and spiritual Israel. *Glory of Lebanon* as a general phrase is followed by some specifications concerning the region. So many references are made in the Bible to Lebanon that I believe it will be well to make a quotation from Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of the Bible as follows: "Lebanon is from LABHEN 'to be white,' because of its appearance when the snow covers its summits, as it does for the greater part of the year, though according to some it was the whiteness of its cliffs that gave L. its name. . . . The whole mass [the two ranges] abuts on the Mediterranean to the W. and slopes down into the plateau of Syria to the E. The average height of the range is not far from 6,000 feet, rising, however, at the highest point (Mt. Hermon) to 9,166 feet. The general structure of Lebanon is rugged and irregular, except for the main direction of the chain of summits, and abounds in precipitous [steep] cliffs and hollows, which make it difficult for the traveler, and at the same time an easy hiding-place for the fugitive. . . . In other particulars the Lebanon is noted for its height, which makes it a place of outlook (Song 4: 8), for its streams (Song 4: 15), its snowy summits (Jer. 18: 14), its fragrance (Song 4: 11; Hos. 14: 7), probably the odor of its cedar forests; these are also mentioned on their own account (Judg. 9: 15; Isa. 2: 13, etc.) and poetically called 'the flower of Lebanon' (Nah. 1: 4), 'the glory of Lebanon' (Isa. 35: 2; 60: 13). The 'violence done to Lebanon' is evidently the cutting down of these stately forests (Hab. 2: 17). Besides the cedars, however, large pines, firs, oaks, and cypress groves are to be found on the range; while the almond, the mulberry, the fig, the olive, the walnut, the apricot, the pear, the pomegranate, the pistachio, and the grapevine also flourish." In view of the prominence given to Lebanon in the Bible, both as to its literal value and also as a basis for political and spiritual comparisons, I trust the reader will carefully note this quotation and be prepared to make frequent reference to it when the occasion presents itself. One such occasion is the present verse where the prophet is using it for the purpose of comparison as stated at the beginning of comments on the verse.

Verse 14. The prophet wrote his book over a hundred years before the captivity began, and the release from that bondage came after the 70-year period had passed. Hence most if not all of the generation who performed the action of capturing the Jews were dead when the time of release came. That is why we have the reference to *the sons also of them that afflicted thee*. It is true these descendants of the enemy nation were brought to yield to the people of Israel when their return to power came about. The latter part of the verse was especially fulfilled as recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah concerning the work of restoration in Jerusalem.

Verse 15. *Forsaken and hated* refers to the period of the captivity. God did not hate his people but he did forsake them as a chastisement for their unfaithfulness to him, and they were hated by the Babylonians who treated them very harshly. While the Jews were in Babylon their home land lay untilled and desolate. As a result the caravans and other travelers avoided that territory as they were passing through the country. All this was to be reversed after the captivity so that the people of the world would consider it a pleasure to travel that way on their journeys.

Verse 16. *Suck the milk* means they will partake of the wealth of the Gentiles. This is just another form of the same prediction that we have previously studied, and it was to be fulfilled first when the nation came into "diplomatic" relations with Israel. It was to have its spiritual fulfillment when the Gentiles were admitted to the benefits and obligations of the Gospel. (See Acts 11: 18; Eph. 2: 13, 17.)

Verse 17. These figures of speech have a special application to ancient Israel. They are used because of the contrast between the terms that are named in pairs. The first of each pair refers to the former unpleasant situation through which Israel passed, and the second that which came to them after the captivity. Brass is less desirable than gold, iron less than silver, wood less than brass, and stones less than iron. The last clause of the verse is especially for the consolation of the common people of Israel. They had been mistreated by the leaders of the nation even before the captivity. After the return there was to be a change of treatment and the officers would rule peaceably. Instead of the cruel

exactors (see comments on ch. 58: 3, their creditors would deal righteously with them. (See an instance of this in Neh. 5: 1-12.)

Verse 18. Israel was to be a happy nation after being restored to her native land, and nothing like a national captivity was ever to occur again. However, the vision of the prophet has so much of the institution of Christ in it that a mixed application of the predictions need be no surprise to us. *Salvation* is therefore a prediction that has special reference to the spiritual benefits the world was to be offered through the dispensation of religion under Christ.

Verse 19. The sun and moon are great blessings for man in the material world, and the remarks here made about them should not be thought of as a belittling of them. On the other hand, even the form of contrast presented is a compliment for the wonderful benefits these works of creation are to the world. The illustration is somewhat like the ones in verse 17 in that the contrasts pertain to the degree and not to the quality of the things being considered. In other words, the things spoken of are both desirable but one is more so than the other. Man needs the light of the sun and moon but he needs spiritual light much more. The Lord was to furnish that light through the spiritual system to be introduced into the world through Christ.

Verse 20. As great as the blessing of sunlight is, yet it has to be withdrawn at the close of the day. In the great arrangement of the spiritual system through Christ there will be no suspension of that light. Citizens of the new nation under the Lord may have unbroken light. *Days of mourning* is a figure used in reference to the past misfortunes of ancient Israel but is meant to apply to the same benefits that Jesus had in mind in Matt. 5: 4.

Verse 21. *People shall be righteous* is one of the contrasts between citizenship in the nation of fleshly Israel and that in the kingdom of Christ. A fleshly birth and circumcision at the age of eight days made a person a full citizen in the ancient kingdom. In that to come under Christ a person must become righteous or spiritually changed before he can even become a citizen therein. (See John 3: 3, 5; Heb. 8: 10.) *Inherit the land for ever* is an allusion to the break that was to come in the residence of Israel in Palestine, but its significance is in reference to

the permanence of spiritual blessings to come unto the citizens of the kingdom of Christ. *Branch of my planting* evidently has direct reference to the church of Christ and to him as its founder. That such is the meaning of the term is evident from the wording of Isa. 4: 2; 11: 1; Jer. 23: 5; 33: 15; Zech. 3: 8; 6: 12.

Verse 22. These are more figures in the form of contrast as to degree. A *little one* would not be expected to have much power when measured from a literal standpoint, but under Christ the smallest servant may become a mighty force for good. Paul gives the secret of this kind of strength where he exhorts Christians to be "strong in the Lord" as soldiers of the cross. (See Eph. 6: 10.)

### ISAIAH 61

Verse 1. The first three verses of this chapter should be marked as a bracket and labeled as a prophecy of Christ. We are left with no doubt as to the application for Jesus so interprets it in Luke 4: 16-21. With this general comment on the bracket, let us consider more particularly the items in the various verses. The *Lord God* is the Father and *me* is a pronoun for Christ. *Spirit is upon me* means that Christ spoke as the Spirit of God directed him. He had been born of a human mother but his inspiration was from the divine source which made his teaching infallible. *Anointed* is from a word that the lexicon defines "to consecrate." The figure is based on the fact that when a man was set apart to be a king or to some other important office he was anointed by having oil poured on his head. This figurative sense is the meaning of the words, "hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. 1: 9). The special work for which Christ was anointed was to *preach good tidings* which means the good news of the kingdom. The *meek* are those who are humble enough to be taught, for the others will spurn the simplicity of the Gospel from them. That is why Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5: 5). *Bind broken-hearted* corresponds to the promises of Jesus that they who mourn shall be comforted (Matt. 5: 4). *Liberty to captives* is a prediction that men in the service of sin would be offered their freedom (Rom. 6: 16-18). Opening the prison is a repetition of the preceding clause and takes the same comments.

Verse 2. *Acceptable* means delightful, and the original for *year* is defined "a year (as a revolution of time)." The clause means that Christ would announce an epoch in the process of time in which people would be delighted with the favors offered to them by the Lord. *Day* is used also as an indefinite period of time coinciding with the year of the preceding clause. While men will be delighted with the favors offered to those who accept the glad tidings of Christ, those who reject them will be warned of the vengeance of God against them. *Comfort all who mourn* has been explained in the preceding verse which the reader will please see.

Verse 3. The first half of this verse is made up of contrasting figures as have been used a number of times. *Beauty* is from *PEER*, which Strong defines, "an embellishment, i. e., fancy head-dress." *Ashes* were spread on the head in times of distress according to a custom in ancient times. The statement means that the ashes of mourning will be replaced by the beautiful garments of righteousness provided by Christ. *Praise* and *heaviness* are used as contrasts for the same purpose as the figures in the preceding clause. Continuing the use of figures for the benefits under Christ, his servants are likened to trees whose fruit is righteous. The reason for such successful fruitage is given in that these trees were the *planting of the Lord*. Some further reasoning on the subject is offered to show the motive of the Lord in doing the kind of planting referred to, and that is *that he might be glorified*. A fruit grower who was particular about his reputation in that industry would be careful what kind of trees he set out. Another thing a careful grower would do is to be on the lookout for strange trees or plants that were not authorized to be put in his ground, and if any should be found they would be destroyed. (Matt. 15: 13.)

Verse 4. The "telescope" is shortened again and the prophet sees the improved conditions in Palestine after the captivity. The country was to be renewed by having the buildings rebuilt and the land put into cultivation again.

Verse 5. This is a prediction of the friendliness that was to be shown to Israel by the surrounding nations. The fulfillment in part may be seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as the Biblical history on the subject.

Verse 6. Again the prophet has his

vision extended and he sees into the conditions of the world under the Gospel dispensation or system of religion under Christ. *Ministers* does not have any official meaning, but means those who serve or attend upon the Lord and it applies to all persons who will have accepted Christ. *Eat the riches of the Gentiles* is the familiar prediction that under Christ the Gentiles and Jews were to be on equal footing as to the rights and privileges in service to the Lord.

Verse 7. *For your shame* means in place of the shame that the nation had been through in the captivity, and it was to have double that amount of honor bestowed upon it afterward. This was fulfilled literally when the Persians and other people showed so much attention to the work of reconstruction of the country. It was to be fulfilled spiritually when the Gentiles responded to the call of the Gospel.

Verse 8. This verse is directed against the leaders of the Jews because of their inconsistent practices through the years. They would impose on the poor by withholding from them their just dues, and by cruel exactions in cases of financial obligations. They would then seek to make up for it to the Lord by pretended religious devotions. (See ch. 58: 3.) That is why the Lord declared he hated burnt offerings when the articles to be used had been stolen. But God does *love judgment* which means he desires his people to deal justly with each other. But the captivity was to work a reformation among these offenders and when they get back into their own land again the Lord would bless their nation abundantly. And while on that line of thought the prophet saw this same nation being honored by giving to the world a spiritual religion based on the *everlasting covenant* that is referred to also in Heb. 8: 8-12.

Verse 9. *Seed shall be known among the Gentiles* is the same prediction of the call of the Gentiles that has been repeated so frequently. The quality of the spiritual stock to be produced through Christ and his church will be such that it will be generally recognized. A specific instance of such a fact is recorded in Acts 4: 13.

Verse 10. The pronoun *I* represents Israel responding to the favorable prediction just uttered of the good fortune to come to her. It was to cause great rejoicing both temporally and spiritually. *Garments of salvation* are the robes of righteousness that the people

of God were destined to wear in the new dispensation under Christ. The decking and adorning predicted are to be spiritual such as named in 1 Pe. 3: 3, 4.

Verse 11. There can be no effect without a cause which is shown when a plant springs forth in a garden. And the same God who rules in the kingdom of nature will also be the cause for the great spiritual blessings to spring forth in the world. The universal extent of the spiritual growth which was to include the call of the Gentiles is indicated by the closing words *before all nations*.

### ISAIAH 62

Verses 1, 2. The pronoun *I* stands for the prophet Isaiah who is making it emphatic that he will not hold his peace. The subject of what he sees in his vision is so important that he is determined to continue predicting the progress of the coming events until he reaches the climax of the favors to be poured out upon the ones intended in the blessings of God. The recipient of these blessings is here called *Zion* and *Jerusalem*. The first is an outstanding hill in Jerusalem that was the site of many noted events. It was also thought of as the capital of the nation and sometimes was called the "city of David." Because of its prominence both geographically and politically the word was often used for the city of Jerusalem as a whole. When the word *Zion* is used figuratively it refers to God's people both fleshly and spiritually. For the latter meaning see Heb. 12: 22. Since *Zion* was the capital of ancient Israel geographically, and also since it was the place where Jesus died (that is Jerusalem) to establish the new or spiritual Israel, *Zion* or *Sion* came to be a figurative name for the people of God in the institution of spiritual Israel. The church was founded by Christ who came into the world as a Jew and thus as a production from the people whose capital was *Zion*. This explains why so many of the good things said of the church and its members are attributed to *Zion*, and hence the prophet here declares it is for *Zion's sake* that he is about to make this noted prediction. In the language of grammar we should say that *Zion* and *Jerusalem* form the antecedent of the following pronouns in the paragraph: *Therefore, thy and thou*. Therefore, whatever is said of any of these pronouns is to be applied to *Zion* if considered of fleshly Israel, or the church as a prediction of spiritual

Israel. The *new name* was therefore promised to *Zion* and was to be fulfilled when spiritual *Zion* came into being. The word *new* is derived from an original that is defined, "to be new; causatively to rebuild." *Name* is from *shem* and Strong defines it, "A primitive word; and appellation [name or title], as a mark or memorial of individuality; by implication honor, authority, character." The sense of this famous passage is thus very clear, that the people represented by *Zion* would some day take on an entirely different character that would give them a new name, one by which they had never been known before. The wording of the comments on this clause is so well done in Pocket Bible Handbook (by Halley), that I shall give the reader the benefit of it. "Up to the coming of Christ, God's people were known as 'Jews' or 'Hebrews.' After that, they were called 'Christians.'" This comment agrees with the other part of the prediction in that it was to be fulfilled at the same time that "the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness," which we know was to be after Christ called these nations to become a part of his people.

Verse 3. *Crown* and *diadem* are two names for practically the same thing. It sometimes means a symbol of authority, at others it is an adornment of the head as a reward for faithful and dignified service. When it is bestowed by a person of high rank it signifies all the more glory and honor. Certainly, then, if such an ornament is bestowed by the Lord it indicates the greatest of honors possible and proper for human beings. Such an honor is here predicted in favor of the Lord's people who will be called by the new name of Christians (Acts 11: 26; 26: 28; 1 Pe. 4: 16).

Verse 4. This verse should have an application to both ancient and modern Israel. The application to ancient Israel is literal and refers to the period of the captivity through which she will have passed when the prediction becomes due for fulfillment. The land of Palestine was actually forsaken during the 70 years for the Lord had turned his people over to a foreign nation as a chastisement for their sins. This fact resulted in a desolate condition because the land was not cultivated through that period. The people of Israel were previously likened unto a wife and God was her husband, but this wife was guilty of unfaithfulness and her husband became displeased



with her and "put her away" (ch. 50: 1). When the unfaithful wife reformed, her husband, though deeply wronged and grieved, again took delight in her and took her back into the marriage relationship again. *Hebzibah* is from *CHEPITSRY* and Strong's definition is, "My delight (is) in her." *Beulah* is from *BAWAL*, which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to be master; hence to marry." In view of the particular meaning of these words I have made the comments in the verse as per above.

Verse 5. *Sons* is a strained translation here and throws the composition somewhat into confusion. The outstanding thought in the original word is "founder or builder." In keeping with the figure of the marriage relation introduced in the preceding verse it is God (here erroneously rendered *sons*) who will remarry Israel, who is the antecedent of *thee*. The whole verse is parallel in thought with the preceding verse. After taking back his penitent wife with the same feeling of admiration a young man would have for his virgin bride he gives her a beautiful wedding dowry. That gift is in the form of a prediction that they (this husband and wife) would some day give to the world a most wonderful kind of offspring, which we should understand will be the same people with the new name of verse two.

Verse 6. *Watchmen* is from a word that refers to sentinels who were used in ancient times by walled cities. It was the duty of these men to be always on the watch for any approach of either friend or foe. In the case of the former the idea was to be expecting the arrival of someone with news of interest for the city. An instance of this may be found in 2 Sam. 18: 24-27 where David was depending on his watchman on the wall to announce the coming of some person with news of the battle that was being waged against his wayward son Absalom. The word is used figuratively in our verse and primarily has reference to the inspired prophets who were on the watch for approaching events. By the eye of inspiration they could look into the future and see the things that were to come to pass regarding their country and people. *Never hold their peace* signifies that these inspired prophets will be constantly alert and ready to report what they see in the future. In a spiritual but more general sense the Lord has also some men on the walls of Zion today who are to be ready to detect

and announce all information that will be of interest to the church. *Make mention*. Others besides the inspired prophets were expected to be interested in the welfare of their nation and add their words of admonition to those of the prophets, that the people might be exhorted to keep respectful remembrance of their own true God and his goodness to them.

Verse 7. *Give him no rest* denotes the constancy of these watchmen in their service on behalf of *Him* who is the one over the people and concerning whose activities these prophets were speaking. *Till he establish* has practically the same thought and is a declaration that God will finally bring to pass all the events he has inspired his sentinels to announce.

Verse 8. *Right hand and arm of strength* are figurative expressions, meaning the Lord had put his whole being behind the predictions on behalf of his people. *No more given thy corn*, etc., is a promise that Israel would not again be turned over to her enemies to be despoiled of her possessions. Regardless of what other misfortunes awaited the people of God, there was never to be another captivity in which the nation would be taken possession of as a whole by another nation brought against them.

Verse 9. Instead of producing the fruits of their labor for the benefit of others, God's people would be permitted to enjoy them as their rightful privilege. They not only would consume these good things but would recognize the source from where they had come and would praise Him. *Drink it in the courts* means they would not have to slip out their provisions and partake of them in secret for fear of the enemy. Instead, they will be free to engage in all of their activities under the very protection of their Lord's institutions.

Verse 10. Once more the "telescope" is extended into the next dispensation and the prophet sees the great favor of God to be given his people. The form of language pertains to the literal rebuilding and restoration of the land of Palestine after the captivity. But the important application of the prophecy is to the work that was to be accomplished in the time of Christ. We shall have this statement verified before getting through with the chapter. *Lift up a standard* means the prophet was to raise a flag or banner in token of the universal provision the Lord would some day make for the people,

which includes a promise to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Verse 11. *Daughter of Zion* means the people of Jerusalem who were destined to have a great blessing bestowed upon them. *Thy salvation cometh* is a prophecy of Christ beyond any doubt for it is so applied in Zech. 9: 9 and Matt. 21: 5. *Reward is with him* is a prediction that Jesus will have the power to reward all those who serve him in truth. In other words, he will not have to leave the rewarding of his workers to another, but will be given the authority to manage that feature of his system himself, which he indicated by his statement to his apostles recorded in Matt. 28: 18.

Verse 12. *They shall call them* indicates that the world will recognize such qualities in the followers of Christ. *Sought out, a city not forsaken* was fulfilled for fleshly Israel when Jerusalem was restored after the captivity. But while the wording of it is based on that literal event, its spiritual fulfillment was to be when Christ would have built his church. That word is from *EKKLESIA* and Thayer's first definition of it is, "Properly a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place." This would constitute the people of Christ as a *sought out* or "called out" group which would fulfill this prediction.

### ISAIAH 63

Verse 1. The grape industry was a leading one in Palestine and hence many illustrations have been drawn from it in the Bible. These illustrations are sometimes based on the industry as a whole, or they may be made by reference to the juice of the grape, depending on the particular point the writer has in mind. Also, the juice is used both favorably and unfavorably in the illustration, this depending likewise on the purpose of the comparison. Since wine is a nourishment and serves as a tonic to the physical system, it is used favorably in comparison with the blood of such a body because blood is the life of that body both human and beast (Gen. 9: 4; Lev. 17: 14.) And since pure wine is red it is referred to in cases of wrath (both human and divine and both righteous and otherwise) because when the individual in the case is stirred up his blood (which is red) is in an agitated condition. A few places in the scriptures to show that wine is referred to as wrath are Jer. 25: 15; 51: 7; Rev. 14: 10; 16: 19. With the foregoing information in

mind we should understand why a reference might be made to a place or other subject because of the color of wine, there being no other relationship between the thing referred to and the point being made by the writer. Such an instance is now at hand in the present verse and two following it. The passage as a whole (first three verses of the chapter) is a prediction of Christ who was to come into the world and shed his blood for the redemption of man from his sins. Thus the only reason for mentioning *Edom* is that the word means "red" and *Bozrah* was the capital of that country. The prophet makes his prediction in the form of a supposed scene coming up before him. He sees a man coming from a distant place which, on account of the meaning of the names of it causes him to "see red." He asks who it is and receives the answer from the person himself: *I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save*, and we understand it to be the voice of Christ.

Verse 2. The imaginary conversation continues between the prophet and the person coming from *Edom*. Having been told that he was righteous and able to save, it might seem strange that such a person would have the appearance which the prophet sees. He asks that righteous saviour why his garments looked as if he had been treading in the *winevat* (winepress) and the next verse will explain it to him. That the reader may better understand and appreciate this wonderful subject as it is treated here and in other parts of the Bible, I shall make some quotations from works of reference as follows: "The gathered grapes were thrown into the press, consisting of a shallow vat, also excavated in the rock (Joel 3: 13). The grapes were then crushed by treading; and the treaders sung and shouted (Isa. 16: 10) while the red blood of the grapes flowed around them, and stained their skin and garments (Isa. 63: 1-3; Jer. 25: 30; 48: 33; Lam. 1: 15; Rev. 19: 13-15). From the upper vat the juice of the crushed grapes trickled down into the lower vat." Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia, article Wine. "Every vineyard had its wine-press, a stone tub or vat in which, with shouts of joy the grapes were trodden . . . If the soil was rocky, the press was hewn out in the rock. Connected with it, but on a lower level, was a receiving-vat into which the must (unfermented grape juice) flowed to be clarified. From this it was drawn off into jars (Jer. 48: 11),

or skins (Job 32:19)." Funk and Wagnalls Dictionary, page 938. "The wine-presses of the Jews consisted of two receptacles or vats placed at different elevations, in the upper one of which the grapes were trodden, while the lower one received the expressed juice. The two vats are mentioned together only in Joel 3:13: 'The press is full; the fats overflow'—the upper vat being full of fruit, the lower one overflowing with the must. The two vats were usually hewn out of the solid rock. Isa. 5:2, margin; Matt. 21:33. Ancient wine-presses, so constructed, are still to be seen in Palestine." Smith's Bible Dictionary, article Wine-press.

Verse 3. In the preceding verse the prophet asked the person approaching why his garments had the appearance of having been worn by one who had been treading in the winevat. The answer shows that a very good reason existed for their appearing just that way for indeed he had been doing such a work; not only so, but he had been doing that alone. If a person would get his garments stained in that work when assisted by others, how much more so if deserted by all the others and he would need to tread round and round until the grapes were completely crushed. This feature of the picture is a prediction that Christ alone would be able to furnish the blood required for the salvation of mankind. But while it was necessary that Christ be the sole person who could give the blood that would save those who applied it, the attitude of others in letting him suffer alone is none the less to be condemned. The apostles all forsook Christ in his darkest hours which was also predicted in Isa. 53:6 and fulfilled in Matt. 26:56. Passing from the favorable to the unfavorable phase of the subject the lone treader thinks of the evil characters in the world whose sinful life made it necessary for him to tread out the grapes, and in this view of the case he is doing it as a demonstration of wrath against evil doers. Hence, this performance of Jesus will at once serve two purposes. Those who partake of this wine with the right motive will be cleansed by it and made fit for service in the kingdom of Christ now, and for eternal joy hereafter. Those who reject the benefits offered through this wine (blood of Christ) will find it to be a signal of the fury of the Lord against all who thus rebel. Instead of merely having his garments stained with the blood of the grape that would have cleansed

these sinners, the Son of God will crush them by his divine vengeance so that their guilty blood upon his garments will be a token that he has attacked and crushed them in his holy wrath.

Verse 4. The first part of this verse corresponds with the last part of the preceding verse. For those who refuse the offered mercy of Christ, nothing is awaiting but the *day of vengeance* which Christ himself will use as his judgment day. This same declaration is made by Paul in Acts 17:31. The last part of the verse is a prediction of the Gospel dispensation which is here called the *year of my redeemed*.

Verse 5. The solitary work of Christ in saving the world is still the subject of this verse. There was no man on whom the Lord could call to bring about the plan of salvation, so he went alone through the ordeal even to dying the shameful death on the cross. *Mine own arm brought salvation to me* does not mean the salvation was for the sake of himself because Christ was never lost. It means it brought to him the means of saving the world for whom he died.

Verse 6. This verse is largely figurative but based on the subject of wine and the activities connected therewith. As it was necessary to tread upon grapes to extract the blood (juice) therefrom, so Christ will tread upon the impenitent sinners who refuse to be cleansed by his blood. When a person is drunk literally on wine it overcomes him and makes him subject to another. Likewise, the people who persist in their rebellion against Christ will be *drunk* on the wine of his divine wrath. This will dispossess them of their strength and subject them to the will of another.

Verse 7. The prophet being a part of us now speaks what he regards as the proper attitude for his people to take toward the Lord. The verse is made up of items concerning the goodness of God toward the nation, even when it was disobedient and unappreciative in its conduct. Isaiah and a small number of other people of Israel always remained faithful and protested the backslidings of the nation.

Verse 8. For a few verses the prophet will be concerned with ancient Israel, recounting the many favors of God upon them even though they were so often guilty of unfaithfulness. The Lord's goodness to the Israelites though unworthy is accounted for by the words *they are my people. Children that will*

*not lie* appears to disagree with the general accusations that are so frequently found against the nation, but it is well to consider the context in order to see the point. God is always ready to give his people "the benefit of the doubt" and does not throw them overboard until there is no hope of their reformation. On this principle he deals with them as if they were faithful children at heart, and that at last they will prove obedient to the divine law. It is somewhat like the thought advanced from the psychological standpoint that if a man is "placed on his honor" he is often influenced thereby to make an effort to merit the confidence. God thus deals with his servants because of his great love for them. However, if long suffering and repeated warnings prove in vain the Lord will at last turn from them. That is why he had the prophet sound the call for reformation of life that is in ch. 55: 6, 7.

Verse 9. *In all their affliction he was afflicted* expresses the feeling that God has for his people when they are in trouble. The same is said of the love of Christ for his people in the dispensation of spiritual Israel (Heb. 4: 15). God often sends his angels to carry out his purposes. The instances on record are too numerous to note in this place, but I shall make a few references (Gen. 16: 7; 24: 7; Ex. 3: 2; Dan. 3: 28; 6: 22; Acts 5: 19; Heb. 1: 14, 14). In the present verse God worked directly on behalf of his people and let his presence (in spirit) be the angel for the service of love to them. It was this fatherly care that was always over the people even though they were so often guilty of ingratitude.

Verse 10. The comments on verse 8 should be read in connection with this. *Turned to be their enemy* should not be considered in the light of a foe who is personally bitter, for God is not disposed in that manner. One word in the lexicon definition of the original is milder which is "adversary." We can understand it to be one who is opposed to another but still leaving the cause for the opposition and the method of expressing it an open question. A child might resist all efforts to administer treatment for some terrible disease. It could even be necessary for the parent to use force to the extent of beating the back of the child; yet that would not mean the parent had ceased to love his child. Such treatment would really be for the good

of the offspring according to the idea set forth in Heb. 12: 6-12.

Verse 11. The history of Israel is one filled with rebellion and forgetfulness of God's kindness. Back as far as the time of Moses when they had not been more than a few months out of bondage, they became impatient just because their leader was called from their sight a short while to receive the law. They forgot the 10 plagues and other indications of divine power manifested while yet in the land of Egypt.

Verse 12. And if the scenes in Egypt were too overwhelming for them to have a distinct remembrance of them, they surely should have remembered seeing the Red Sea parting and standing like two walls of ice with no apparent cause but an east wind.

Verse 13. Had the whole matter stopped with the opening of the sea they might have assumed that what they saw was more imaginary than real and that no benefit could have come to them by the circumstance. But when God *led them through the deep* there could be no doubt of the real facts in the case. They were at the very time referred to in verse 11 on the opposite side of the sea and a safe distance from their old enemy. This fact should have stood out in their minds and caused them to be ashamed at the mere thought of complaining. *As an horse in the wilderness.* An animal lost in the wilderness would likely go in the opposite direction from the correct one if not guided by some higher intelligence. Likewise, even after the Red Sea was divided until a tunnel appeared before them, none but the divine Being would have conducted them safely through that strange and uninviting passage.

Verse 14. God is the maker of all things that exist and their welfare is according to the laws established for their regulation. When a beast finds a quiet place between the hills and lies down to rest it is according to the arrangement of God. He is still more concerned about the comfort of his people and will always do that which will be to their advantage. *Make a glorious name.* When a people like Israel is brought up against other nations more numerous and powerful than they, no human help would get them out of their difficulty. The fact of their successful encounter with such foes would go to the praise of their God and thus give him a glorious name.

Verse 15. The prophet is making a fervent appeal to God for mercy on



behalf of his people. *Bowels* and *mercies* are used in the same sense and refer to the affections of the Lord. *Toward me* is said because the prophet "takes it to heart" when the nation is in trouble. He does not excuse the shortcomings of the nation but implores the Lord to have compassion on the people.

Verse 16. One of the prominent practices of the Jews was to boast of their relation to Abraham (Matt. 3: 9) and to count on that to justify them before God. But this verse represents them as overlooking that supposed advantage and relying on the love of God for his created beings regardless of their earthly blood line. They are even so confident of the favor of God that they believe they would receive it even though Abraham still lived and would disown them. That idea is correct for if God cares for the people of his creation he will take care of them regardless of the attitude of any earthly ancestor. If this verse is carried over into a spiritual application we will find it to be true there also. In Gal. 3: 29 Paul states that Christians are Abraham's seed, but it is not through the blood line of that patriarch. Instead, it is because of their spiritual relation to Abraham through Christ who descended from the patriarch, the man who was called out from his home and people to become the ancestor of a special race. And in that sense it could truly be said that Abraham (as to race or blood) would be *ignorant* of Christians. It is true that the blood flowing in the veins of Jewish Christians had been received from Abraham, but the Galatian brethren were not Jewish in blood and hence Abraham would have no connection with them in blood any more than would other generations long gone by.

Verse 17. God does not directly cause a man to do that which is evil nor make him to err. But he does leave a man to his own unrighteous ways whenever that is necessary to teach him a lesson. It was in that sense that God *made them to err* from his ways. On the same principle they were left to harden their hearts so that they did not fear God as they should. But now they realize their mistake and are begging the Lord to return his mercy to the tribes for the sake of his servants. This form of speech truly represents the state of mind that the people of Israel will yet possess (Psa. 137) and the prophet makes the prediction by putting these

words in the mouths of his people. It also is a prediction that God will return to the nation and bring an end to the captivity that had been suffered as a national chastisement.

Verse 18. This verse looks forward to the time when the captivity will come upon the nation. Israel is represented as complaining at that time because she had possessed the holy land *but a little while*. No doubt it will seem that way to them for when men have been dispossessed of a great blessing they often feel as if the time of enjoying it was short. To add to the sadness of the situation, the cherished and holy institutions were to be trodden down and possessed by the adversaries.

Verse 19. *We are thine* is said in protest against losing their country, especially when it was to be possessed by a people that had never been subject to the Lord's rule. They will be a people who had never worn the name of God, and yet were destined to take possession of the land belonging to his people. This was the thought that grieved the prophet and he expressed it on behalf of the nation as sharing it.

#### ISAIAH 64

Verse 1. The penitential attitude of Israel is continued as we start the study of this chapter. *Rend the heavens* is a phrase of emphasis to indicate the tension in the minds of the people, or at least to show what the prophet thinks should be their condition of mind. *Mountain flow down* is figurative and means the overwhelming effect of God's power over those who have disregarded his law. And since *mountains* in symbolic language means the governments of the earth, this phrase is a demand for and prediction of the subjection of the governments to the power of the God of Israel.

Verse 2. The prophet would have the power of the Lord so intense that it could be compared with the heat of a melting pot. The material that he would have thrown into this melting pot was the enemy nations who were destined to afflict God's people in about a century later. The captivity was necessary for the correction of the Israelite nation, yet that would not justify the personal satisfaction that the heathen took from their part in the plan. *Nations may tremble* is a prediction of the effect that would be experienced by the various nations when they see the overthrow of the particular one that had oppressed God's

people. But in addition to the above thoughts we should not lose sight of the fact that Isaiah saw much in the happenings to fleshly Israel that was to be accomplished in the days of spiritual Israel though not in a material or literal sense. When the Gospel was preached to "all nations" as the apostolic commission required, the people of those nations, Jew and Gentile *trembled* in the sense of respecting the great truths and many individuals accepted them.

Verse 3. *Terrible things* means things that could either frighten in the common use of that word, or fill the mind with respect. It doubtless had the first meaning when applied to the heathen nations connected with the oppression of fleshly Israel as indicated in Dan. 5: 6. It was to have the second meaning when the Lord set up the spiritual reign of Christ under the administration of the Gospel. *Mountains* in symbolic language means governments and any public institutions. It is true that the church was instrumental in bringing into the world the great truths of human freedom of conscience and thus paved the way for the downfall of world-wide monarchies. (See Dan. 2: 44.) In this sense the *mountains flowed down* according to Isaiah's prediction.

Verse 4. This is the only place in the Old Testament where this passage occurs. If it is referred to in the New Testament we will be certain as to the correct application. Well, that has been done with regard to this verse in 1 Cor. 2: 9 where Paul was writing on the subject of the work of the apostles through the power of the Spirit. This passage means that man is not able by his natural senses to discover the spiritual things that God has in store for those who *wait for* (rely upon) him. That would make it necessary for some supernatural means to be used to impart the information. The next verse (1 Cor. 2: 10) gives the explanation by saying it had been revealed to "us" (the apostles) by the Spirit.

Verse 5. *Him* stands for the one who waits for or relies on the Lord mentioned in the close of the preceding verse. *Meetest* means to be favorable and God will be so toward the *him* just described. *Worketh righteousness* is a phrase with a similar thought to much of the New Testament teaching. It is not enough to profess a belief in God's system of righteousness, but it must be put into practice or worked

out. (See Acts 10: 35; 1 Cor. 15: 58; Gal. 5: 6; Jas. 1: 25.) *Remember thee* does not mean merely that a man have a good memory so that he can repeat the scriptures one verse after another. The passage requires that he remember the Lord in *thy ways*. The last word is from *DEREK* which Strong defines, "a road (as trodden); figuratively a course of life or mode of action, often adverbially." In direct connection with this clause is the phrase *worketh righteousness*, and that shows the prophet means the individual is expected to remember the ways of the Lord by doing the things that make up those ways. The next clause of the verse is a confession of wrong doing which caused the Lord to be wroth; the people had sinned against Him. They acknowledged that it could have been avoided had they shown the proper respect for the divine law. They admitted that in *those (thy ways)* is *continuance*, which means that the favor of God will be unfailing upon those who walk in the ways of the Lord. *Shall be saved* is true both as to their national life, and also in regard to the spiritual welfare of all mankind.

Verse 6. This verse is a continuation of the confession which the prophet makes on behalf of the nation, and the figure of speech used is one of the strongest that could be set forth. A person's manner of life has always been compared to a garment to cover his body. It is still so used in this verse except to compare the life to the most corrupt of garments. The word *filthy* is from *ARD* and Strong's definition is, "From an unused root meaning to set a period; the menstrual flux; by implication, soiling." So the soiled condition of a woman's clothing at the time indicated is used to illustrate the corrupt religious garments that Israel had been wearing, and she is represented also as making acknowledgment to the disgraceful fact. Their sinful life is also likened to a faded and wilted leaf that had become so light and worthless that the wind pulled it from the tree and blew it away.

Verse 7. The nation as a whole became so corrupt that God turned from it and let the enemy nation take it over. *None that calleth* represents the leading men of the nation. They had oppressed the common people and influenced them into a life of corruption like that of the heathen about them. Now as a chastisement for their sins

they were to be turned over to the power of that very kind of people, to continue their idolatrous practices right in the land of the heathen whose ways they had been following. *Hast consumed us* is past tense in grammatical form but it is a prediction of the national downfall that was to come upon them a century later.

Verse 8. This is a sincere acknowledgment in form, but it really is an inspired prediction of what was destined to be their frame of mind after the effects of the captivity will have come before them (Psa. 137). Just as the potter has the right to use the clay as he sees fit, so God has authority over the people whom he has created, to do with them as his divine wisdom will dictate.

Verse 9. This is another prediction in the form of a plea for mercy and pardon. Those very favors were destined to be granted to the people after they have suffered in a strange land. The greatest of all reasons for the Lord's mercy is indicated in the words *we are all thy people*.

Verses 10, 11. While the form of speech here as in so many other places is the present tense, the paragraph is a prediction of the literal facts that were destined to take place over a hundred years in the future. When the Babylonians invaded Palestine they concentrated their principal efforts on Jerusalem and finally burned it. They also removed the inhabitants out of the land into the land of Babylon. This state of affairs resulted in the desolation of the country in general. The Biblical account of this terrible event is in 2 Ki. 24 and 25. The historical account of it was quoted in connection with the comments at ch. 3: 1.

Verse 12. The comments on verses 8 and 9 will be applicable on this as to the state of mind of the Jews and the prophetic characteristics in them as the prophet was using the situation. The frame of mind that the Jews exhibited in Babylon was one of great remorse and acknowledgment of unworthiness. The prophet makes a prediction of that condition by wording their complaints according to this verse.

### ISAIAH 65

Verse 1. The "telescope" is again extended and the prophet sees into the time when the Gentiles were to be taken into the same relationship with the Lord as the Jews. We know this is the meaning of this verse because Paul so applies it in Rom. 10: 20. *Am*

*sought and asked not* is the prophet's way of expressing the change that was to come into the position and activities of the Gentiles. They had not asked for the Lord by way of the Mosaic system because no invitation had ever been offered them to do so. But this was changed in Acts 10 where they were even told to make inquiry for information that would bring them into covenant (saving) relationship with Christ. These people finally *found* the Lord who had not even been searching for him for the reason just stated. The Gentile nation had not been given the privilege of even wearing the name of the Lord. The point the prophet is making is that the Gentiles with comparatively small opportunities had become happy servants of the Lord at the first opening and had been appreciative of the favors granted them.

Verse 2. In contrast with the preceding circumstance, the Jews who were God's people had been unmindful of the many privileges they could have enjoyed. And this, too, in spite of the fact that the Lord was continually pleading with them to show some appreciation for the offered favors by accepting them on the terms stipulated. Isaiah calls them a *rebellious people* and indicates the cause for their rebellion, which is that they walked *after their own thoughts*. This sets forth a principle of action that is always the same in its results. If a man is determined to walk according to his own thoughts and desires he is bound to disregard the law of the Lord for the two principles of conduct do not agree. This great truth is abundantly taught in the New Testament. (See Matt. 6: 24; Rom. 6: 16; 7: 15-25.)

Verse 3. This verse has special reference to the idolatrous practices of the Jewish people. In Ex. 20: 5 God said that he was a jealous God and it was said in connection with the commandment against making any gods to worship besides the true God. This corruption was what continually provoked the Lord. There is no hiding from God at any time or in any sense, so that all is done as is naked and open before him as if he were present in person. But the phrase *to my face* indicates the boldness of these idolaters and their utter disregard for the Lord. Smith's Bible Dictionary says, "The retirement of gardens rendered them favorite places for devotion," which accounts for the reference to them in this verse. In these gardens the idolatrous Jews would build altars

of brick on which to burn incense to their heathen gods and thus commit the abominable treason against the God of Israel who had directed where and in what manner incense should be burned in religious devotions.

Verse 4. *Which remain among the graves* has reference to the people called "necromancers" which means people who pretend to seek information from the dead. They were loitering around the graves for that purpose. Moses wrote against such impostors in Deut. 18: 11 and warned his brethren to have nothing to do with such characters. The practice was a form of witchcraft which was a thing God always hated. Such people would also be inclined to pass their time in the solitude of the mountains in order to meditate on the corrupt notions of idolatry. On the same principle that even the ordinary eating of swine's flesh for food was abominable to God in the Old Testament times, so would an idolater regard it pleasing to his god if one not only partook of it for the common use, but would eat it as a part of his religious devotions to the idol. *Broth* is rendered "pieces" in the marginal translation and the lexicon practically agrees with it. *Abominable* is from *riggul*, which Strong defines, "From an unused root meaning to stink; properly fetid, i. e. (figuratively) unclean (ceremonially)." The clause means these people were so eager to please their heathen gods that they devised all possible schemes to get as low as they could in their devotions. They would gather pieces of spoiled scraps of meat and other articles that were supposed to be materials for food. They would dump these vile scraps into their vessels and thicken their soup with them and then eat the mixture as a religious feast to their gods.

Verse 5. It would be bad enough if these vile persons pretended to be as worthy as the average man which would be far from the truth. But these filthy perverters of righteousness claimed to be better than other men. They not only boasted of being better in their own character, but they demanded to be disconnected from the society of others, hence their impudent order to others was to *stand by thyself, come not near to me*. These people were like the Pharisees in Matt. 9: 11 and the one in Luke 18: 11, 12. *Smoke* is from a word that also means "anger," and *nose* is also sometimes used figuratively. The clause means these corrupt

idolaters irritated the Lord to the point of anger even as a vile smoke would irritate the nostrils of an innocent bystander. "Where there is smoke there is fire" is an old and true saying, and it might be asked why the presence of fire was mentioned when it had already been indicated by the words regarding smoke just commented upon. The significant point in the last expression is in the words *all the day*. The continuous existence of the evil is the special phase of the subject meant by the words *underscored*.

Verse 6. *Written before me* has about the same force as the words *to my face* in verse 3. A truth does not have to be literally written before the Lord for him to know about it, but the attitude of these evil doers was so brazen that it was equivalent to a direct account that would be inscribed in bold letters right in the face of Jehovah. *I will not keep silence* is a prediction that sure and strong judgment was to be meted out against these sinners. *Into their bosom* means the recompense or punishment was to be brought home to them in the most intimate degree, so that it would strike at the very base of their emotions. (See the fulfillment as indicated by Psa. 137 and Ezk. 37: 11.)

Verse 7. This verse does not add much new thought as to the nature or completeness of the chastisement to be meted out to the guilty nation. The other thought to which I invite the attention of the reader is the mention of the *iniquities of your fathers* in connection with *your iniquities*. At the time when the Israelite nation was to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians the land had been defrauded out of 70 years of rest (Lev. 26: 33-35). However, this delinquency against the land could not have been all committed by the generation living at the time of the captivity. It had been going on for hundreds of years until the "accumulated vacation" due the land amounted to 70 years. That is why this verse connects the iniquities of the fathers with those of the people to whom the prophet was writing.

Verse 8. The compassion of God is very great and always asserts itself on behalf of humanity in spite of their many shortcomings. For a number of verses the sins of the people has been the subject, and the nation was destined to be sorely punished in a foreign land. Now the subject changes and this and the two following verses form a bracket that predicts the rescue of



God's people from the captivity before it is entirely consumed. That fact is predicted in a beautiful figure or comparison whose outstanding idea is that of preserving something because of a hidden value that is in it. The figure is drawn from a cluster of grapes that has not been pulled from the vine. The blessing of wine is recognized to be in the grapes and for that reason the plant should be preserved. So the nation of Israel was compared to a cluster of grapes which still has a value in it and hence it was to be preserved from destruction in the captivity. Incidentally we have some information on another subject. The juice of the grape is called *wine* even before it is extracted from the fruit, which disproves the theory that the word "wine" always means the fermented juice of grapes and never called by such a term while sweet.

Verse 9. This verse is a direct prediction of the release of a part of the nation from the bondage in Babylon. *Bring forth a seed* has special reference to the remnant of the nation that remained after the period of the captivity was completed. The fulfillment of this is recorded in Ezra 2: 64. *Inheriter of my mountains* would literally mean the repossession of the land of Palestine with its hills and valleys. Also, since *mountains* symbolically means government, the prediction was looking to the return of Israel to power in their own land. This is also fulfilled in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Verse 10. This verse applies to the same event as is predicted in the preceding verses, and refers especially to some of the material blessings to be enjoyed after the return. *Sharon* is a broad, rich tract of land which lies between the mountains of the central part of the holy land and the Mediterranean Sea. During the captivity it was left desolate but was to be used again for the flocks. The valley of Achor was another spot in Palestine that had been left unused for 70 years, but it was to be restored to usefulness after the captivity was over.

Verse 11. The foregoing bracket of favorable predictions will now be dropped and the prophet will again take up the Lord's complaints against his people. They are accused of forgetting the holy mountain which means the institution with headquarters in Jerusalem. *Troop* is from a word that means about the same as the familiar expression "good luck." The idea is

that because of the great number of persons interested in the system of idolatry it would bring a stroke of good fortune to join in the movement by spreading tables everywhere on which to have the idolatrous feasts.

Verse 12. *Number you to the sword* is a prediction of the sword of the enemy that would defeat them and decrease their number. The reason for this severe chastisement was their utter disrespect for God. They would not even show the courtesy of answering the call of the Lord. Their evil conduct was not merely an oversight or done unthoughtfully, but they *did choose* to walk therein, which means their course of action was taken deliberately.

Verses 13, 14. The "telescope" is again extended and the prophet sees the conditions that will happen in the time of Christ and his system of righteousness. It is appropriate to bring up this subject here for it will be the same rebellious Jews to deal with in those years that the Lord was suffering in the days before the captivity. And still remembering Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the nation that came down from them, the Lord was minded to give them the first opportunity when the new and final dispensation was to be launched in the world. This truth is specifically taught in Acts 13: 46, where the apostle Paul was preaching the Gospel to an audience made up mostly of Jews. Accordingly, the Gospel was not even offered to the Gentiles for over three years after it was first given to the Jews. And even after the Gentiles were brought into the same privileges with the Jews, in some cases a special effort was made first to get the Jews into the work. (See Acts 13: 46 again.) Finally, the Jews as a whole rejected the Gospel and became its bitter enemies. After that the Lord instructed his teachers to warn this same old stubborn people of the divine wrath against them, and to show the world the Lord's pleasure at the willingness of the Gentiles to accept the law of Christ and become humble servants under his law. The above facts and truths are predicted in the present paragraph. Let us notice the particular items in this interesting prophecy. The *eating* and *drinking* is figurative and refers to the spiritual blessings that will be enjoyed by those who accept the Gospel. Foreseeing the attitude of the Jews and Gentiles as described in this paragraph the Lord declares *my servants* (the Gentile Chris-

tians) *shall eat*, but *ye* (the Jews) shall be hungry. The same contrast is made between the two peoples as to the Gospel blessings of drinking and rejoicing. All the good things mentioned in this paragraph that are to be given to the world through the Gospel will come to the Gentiles because of their obedience, but will be denied the Jews as a whole because of their disobedience. It was fitting that the prophet be inspired to make this prediction right at the time that the same Jewish people were so disobedient that the captivity was being predicted against them.

Verse 15. In this short verse the prophet spans many centuries of time and makes predictions concerning both fleshly and spiritual Israel. Also, he makes predictions that apply to fleshly Israel in both the Old and New Testament times. The word *curse* is from *SHEBUWAH* and Strong defines it, "properly something sworn, i. e., an oath." Moffatt renders the place: "Shall use the name you leave in uttering a curse." In other words, the Jews had been the ones who had exclusive right to the name of God in their oaths or vows. But they were to lose that privilege and the Gentiles would be given the right to the name. But the Gentiles would not be restricted to the name that had been permitted in olden times, for they were to be called by *another name*. This is the same name that is predicted in ch. 62: 2 which I request the reader to see. Following a practice that frequently is used by the writers in the Bible, this short verse is injected with a prediction of another great event besides the relation of the Jews and Gentiles towards the Gospel, and it is pertaining to the captivity. *Shall slay thee* refers to that event which means they shall die nationally, by reason of the captivity, which is the same subject that is predicted in ch. 22: 14. Between the word *thee* and the next word there is a jump in time of many centuries even though there seems to be one continuous thought. But the prophet goes from the captivity in Babylon to the new name of Christian that was to be given to God's people. While this procedure in writing might impress us as being a disconnected one, it is not so uncommon in the style of the prophet. And in such an instance as the present one we can see a logical basis for it. Fleshly Israel furnished the first recruits for the institution of spiritual Israel for over three years. It almost seemed as if they alone were considered in the

development of the Lord's plan. It was therefore an orderly method of writing to mention the advantages to be received under Christ as being favors that were bestowed on fleshly Israel.

Verse 16. The first application of this verse is to fleshly Israel at the time of their release from Babylon, and the next is to spiritual Israel at the time of Christ. *Blesseth himself* means to pray for blessings and he will do so by calling on the name of God and not the idols if applied to fleshly Israel, and to God and Christ if to spiritual Israel. *Sweareth* is from *SHABA*, which Strong defines, "a primitive root; but used only as a denominative of *SHIBAH* ["seven"]; to seven oneself, i. e., swear (as if by repeating a declaration seven times)." The idea is that by repeating a declaration seven times in the ears of God it would demonstrate the sincerity of the one who did so and show his confidence in expecting the divine blessing. This view of the word makes the application of the prediction proper to both fleshly and spiritual Israel, for while the Jews were permitted to swear in the ordinary sense of the word, Christians are forbidden to do so (Matt. 5: 33-37; James 5: 12). *The former trouble* has special reference to the captivity in Babylon as a punishment for their iniquities. *Hid from mine eyes* means God will be so pleased with the national reformation after the period of the exile that he will not longer look upon the past and hold it against his people.

Verse 17. From this to the close of the chapter the verses should be marked as a bracket and given the general title of "kingdom of Christ," then note the comments verse by verse as they are offered in their order. These verses are highly figurative, but all figures of speech must have some literal facts or truths for a basis or there will be no meaning in the figures. And in the use of figures the writer does not stop to give us the explanation, so we must discover that from the information available and that is actually appropriate. The present temporal dwelling place of man is the *earth* with the *heavens* (air and the region of the planets) surrounding it. Spiritually, then, heavens and earth would be the spiritual world, which is the church connected with the new or Christian Dispensation. This is what Paul means in 2 Cor. 5: 17, and is what Isaiah means in this verse. *Forever . . . not come into mind de-*

notes that after the new creation has been brought into the world, the former (Jewish law) will be no longer in force and no one will have the right to live by it any more. This is the teaching of Paul in Rom. 10: 4 and Gal. 5: 1-4 which should be read carefully.

Verse 18. Jerusalem was the capital of the nation of Israel although its law had come from Mt. Sinai. The kingdom of Christ was not to have any particular city for its headquarters for the government would be local or congregational in form. But the law that was to govern it was sent forth from Jerusalem, and in a spiritual sense that city has been the mother of the people of Christ. The blessings of the citizens of the new creation will be so great that rejoicing is predicted. *Her people a joy* indicates that the presence of the people of the new creation will be a cause of joy in the world because of their benefits to life in general.

Verse 19. Not only will the people of the new creation be a cause of rejoicing to the world, but God will also take pleasure in them. The greatest reason for such joy will be the fact that they will be those who are created in his only and beloved Son. (2 Cor. 5: 17.) *Voice of weeping no more be heard* does not mean that all natural expressions of grief will be banished. Such a conclusion would contradict Rom. 12: 15; 1 Cor. 12: 26 and kindred passages that teach Christians to expect some experiences of grief. But it is more in the nature of Matt. 5: 4, which means that in the kingdom and service of Christ there will be a true source of consolation. There is no genuine occasion of rejoicing out of the Lord which is taught in Isa. 57: 21; Phil. 3: 1.

Verse 20. Let us remember that we are studying a highly figurative description of life in the spiritual realm of Christ. There was to be no such a condition of inability as is true in the physical world as infants, or men who have become old through some infirmity before their actual years would have rendered them infirm. We should picture a country where the long life of its inhabitants is such that even when disease or accident would cause the death of a little child, a reference to dates would show that he is a hundred years old. In such a country if a sinner cannot live more than a hundred years it will be on account of some curse of God upon him.

Verse 21. Continuing the figures the

prophet represents the spiritual realm under Christ as one of satisfaction in its products. It has always been possible in a country to build houses and plant vineyards. But it often happens that some enemy will invade the land and destroy the houses and interfere with the use of the vineyards. In this perfect institution no fear of this kind will need be felt. Not that there will be no enemies of the citizens for there will be those who will persecute. But the actual "houses" and "vineyards" will be the spiritual blessings of the inhabitants and no power can take those away from a faithful servant of Christ.

Verse 22. The first part of this verse is the same in meaning as the preceding one except it is expressed in negative form. The long life of the inhabitants is compared to that of a tree because that most stately of all vegetable plants is known to live many times longer than the average life of man. *Mine elect* is a phrase to designate the citizens of the new creation who have become such by subjection to the laws of the country for the reception of new citizens.

Verse 23. The labor of the inhabitants will be protected from the ravages of the enemy as has previously been promised. However, even without the interference of outside parties, sometimes the earnest toll of the citizen proves unfruitful and disappointing from many of the uncertainties of life. It will not be so in this spiritual realm, but all the labor in the Lord will be a success (1 Cor. 15: 58).

Verse 24. Strictly speaking there could be no answer to a call before one has been made, so the expression must be understood as another figure of speech. The idea is that the Lord's care for his people will be such that he will not wait until they ask for blessings before bestowing them, for he already knows the things they need and deserve. Jesus taught this very thing in Matt. 6: 8. The last clause of this verse is just another form of the same prediction explained above.

Verse 25. The strong but beautiful figures continue. The mingling of these natural enemies in the beast creation in this manner illustrates the peaceable character of the spiritual citizens. A *serpent* figuratively means a wicked person and such a character will not have the privilege of partaking of the good things of life as will the faithful citizens, but will be compelled to live on the filth of the land; in the dust.

And regardless of the natural tendency of such a vile creature to take vengeance on the fortunate persons of the kingdom who may happen to be treading on the ground near him, he will not be permitted to harm the worthy inhabitants of the righteous institution. To speak in literal terms, in the kingdom of Christ there can be no actual harm come to the faithful child of God.

### ISAIAH 66

Verse 1. The outstanding thought in this verse is the great power of God and his independence of all other beings. Moreover, even if the Lord needed anyone to "help him out," man would be unable to do so since he is himself the creature of God's making. And if God needed a place in which to dwell, it would be foolish for man to think he could build a house suitable for the purpose. It would be like a person who had erected a mansion that would house a million giants, then some man much smaller than a giant would think he ought to build a house in which this great builder could dwell. God is so great that his feet fill the universe and his person in general occupies the heaven as the place of his throne.

Verse 2. Since God has made all of the materials from which a man would have to build his proposed dwelling place for Him, he should not think God will expect him to obtain the divine favor by trying to do some great feat like building a showy mansion. No, we are told here the kind of person who will obtain the friendly attention of the Most High. It must be one who is poor and contrite in spirit, which means a man who is humble and who realizes his need for spiritual help. Jesus taught this same principle in Matt. 5: 3. A man whose attitude is opposite of this will not obtain the favor of God. This is not because the Lord just arbitrarily wills that it must be so; there is a logical basis for the conclusion. A man who is not humble and who does not feel the need of spiritual help will naturally not put forth any effort to obtain such help, which means he will not obey the commands of God. And if he will not obey the Lord's commands he need not expect him to look with favor upon him. One word in the lexicon definition of the original for *trembled* is "reverential." Thus if a man is humble of mind and has reverence for the word of God, he has the promise that he will be noticed by Him.

Verse 3. As a general comment on

this verse it should be said the Israelites confounded the true with heathen religious practices. *Is as if* is not in the original Hebrew and the omission will make the thought clearer, which is that they classed the offering of an ox and the sacrificing of a human being as equally acceptable. The same conflicting action would be said of the offering of a lamb (a thing God desired) and that of a dog (a thing God abhorred). An *oblation* was a sacrifice of a clean animal while the blood of swine was unclean, yet these people made no difference between them. God called for the burning of incense, but these Jews replaced that service with the admiration of an idol. In general they placed the way of their own choosing on a par with the commandments that the Lord had instructed them to follow. Such corrupt practices as here described were so displeasing to God that he determined to exile them into the land of the heathen where their religious practice would be the unmixed kind, the pure idolatrous religion they had learned of those heathen.

Verse 4. *Will choose their delusions* means that God would "take them at their word" and just give them over to these idolatrous practices which they seemed to like so well. *Fears* means the things they revered which was the idols of the heathen nations. Since the people of Israel had so much fear or reverence for the idols of the heathen, God determined to bring those very foreigners upon them which was done according to 2 Ki. 24 and 25. This treatment of these wayward Israelites would be just when their long period of rebellion is considered. When their true God called to them they did not even answer, while they not only answered the call of the heathen but yielded their services to them. *Did evil before mine eyes* means their practices were all seen by the eyes of God. This sinful manner of life was not merely through indifference or forgetfulness but it was deliberate; they chose to do so.

Verse 5. In all of this terrible history of rebellion there were some exceptions and God had a few men who remained true. (See the long note at 2 Ki. 22: 17 in Vol. 2 of the COMMENTARY.) These were the ones who would tremble at his word which means they had reverence for it (v. 2). *Brethren hated you* refers to the harsh treatment that was imposed on these righteous people by the wicked leaders (ch.



58: 3), who hypocritically said "Let the Lord be glorified." Now the "tables are turned" and he (the Lord) will appear to *you* (the mistreated Israelites) with *joy*, and *they* (the wicked leaders) *shall be ashamed*.

Verse 6. This verse is a prediction of the wrath of God against the wicked leaders of the nation who have been so cruel toward the common people. *City* means Jerusalem and *temple* is mentioned because it was built in the *city* as the earthly headquarters of the Lord. The determination of God to punish his corrupt people is appropriately represented as being announced in thundering tones (*voice of noise*) from this temple since that is the place where the law was to be executed.

Verse 7. Again the "telescope" (see the illustration at the beginning of this book) is extended and the prophet sees the birth of the church of Christ. The subject is illustrated by the circumstances connected with the facts of physical childbirth, only that the usual experiences are varied. It is the rule that a birth will be preceded by and accompanied with labor pains. The birth of the church is compared to a case where the child was born even before there had been any labor pains; *before she travailed*. This was literally true of the setting up of the church. That event took place as recorded in Acts 2, but there had not been any violence or public disturbances in connection with that wonderful day; there had been no labor pains.

Verse 8. This verse is a repetition of the preceding one with the addition of some inspired comments on the wonderful character of the great event; nothing like it had ever taken place. The earth had never been known to sprout and mature a plant in a day, but always required many days or weeks for the production. And no nation was ever born in a day, for even the great nation composed of the descendants of Abraham required a period of gestation that lasted 430 years in the womb of Egypt before the infant could be born. But here is a child that was destined to be the most important of all institutions the world had ever seen, and the birth was completed in one day and without any preceding labor throes.

Verse 9. The power of God to complete any work he starts is the thought in this verse. Again the prophet uses the subject of childbirth for his illustration. He supposes a case where a person is responsible, either personally

or otherwise, for the pregnancy of a woman, and who cares for her during all the period previous to the time of birth. Then, when the critical hour has come when the expectant mother needs help the most, that person either deserts her or is unable to give her any assistance. It is predicted in question form that the Lord will not be that weak or unfaithful. He had been 4,000 years preparing for the birth of this great institution. The "prenatal" formation had been going on during that time and all the necessary parts of its structure were connected and everything was ready for the birth. The Lord proved his power and faithfulness by completing the great event and helping to deliver the infant church in one day; the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. (See last verse of that chapter.)

Verse 10. When a child is born into a home there usually is great rejoicing, not only on the part of the members of that family but by the friends and neighbors. And continuing the line of comparison with the processes of reproduction in the natural realm, the prophet bids the world to congratulate Jerusalem upon the successful birth of this most important infant. *Love* and *mourn* are both used in connection with Jerusalem. The same friends who would sincerely rejoice over the good fortune of Jerusalem in this important birth, would be the ones who also would *mourn* with her in her many sorrows of the past. This is the same principle that Paul taught when he said: "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12: 15).

Verse 11. The prophet continues his use of the beautiful figures drawn from the circumstances of natural birth and nourishment. And, as is so frequently done in the use of figures, some exceptional performances are supposed and injected into the picture. The ordinary situation when an infant has been born is that the mother will be thereby enabled to supply the nourishment needed for the newborn infant. No others are supposed to need or desire to partake of this nourishment. Here is where the exception is introduced, for the friends are also invited to feed themselves at the breasts of this mother.

Verse 12. But it would be a heavy drain on the strength of this mother for so many others besides her infant to draw upon her supply that was originally intended only for her offspring.

The food she would be able to eat and digest would be what is generally required to nourish herself and her child. But the Lord will take care of that situation and see that the mother is provided with an extra amount of nourishment and of course will be given the ability to take in this added amount of food and she will also be enabled to convert it into nourishment for the use of others. We are to understand this all has a spiritual meaning in its fulfillment. The extra sustenance that is to be furnished this infant (the church) that is to be born in Jerusalem will be the *glory of the Gentiles*. Jerusalem originally had to live only on the services of the Jews, but after the church is born in that city, the services and support of the Gentiles will also be given her. With this additional strength this mother will be able not only to nurse her own offspring, but will be able to take others on her knees near her sides so they might nurse at her spiritual breasts.

Verse 13. God's people who were to be born in Jerusalem will be loved by Him and cared for on the same basis as a mother "stills her child" by her comforting words. The enemies of the people of God have always been on hand when there appeared to be an opportunity for oppressing them. And now, when the former people of the Lord who were restricted to a certain race, are merged with the races of the world to form a newborn offspring, the enemies will be on hand again to project their opposition and endeavor to destroy the child. But God will be attentive and see that all necessary protection is provided for his beloved.

Verse 14. This verse is the same in thought as the preceding one with some additional items on the assurances of divine oversight. It was to be so helpful and evident that all people would be aware of it. Not only would the favor for the righteous be known, but also the wrath of God would be realized against his enemies.

Verse 15. Let us not forget while passing along in our study of this prophetic book that the writer has his eye on both fleshly and spiritual Israel much of the time. Many of his passages are a blending of thoughts applicable to both. The book was written over a century before the captivity and that event was to come as a punishment on the nation for its unfaithfulness. Also, the vengeance upon the heathen whom God used as instruments for his purpose was predicted.

All of the above is indicated in this verse, as well as a glimpse into the more distant future when the Lord would declare his intention of vengeance against the enemies of the church which was to be born in the mother city of Jerusalem.

Verse 16. The vengeance of God on behalf of fleshly Israel was manifested at the end of the captivity. (Dan. 5.) The spiritual fulfillment of this prediction is recorded in Acts 2 where the sword of the Spirit was used and thousands of sinners were brought under its power. *All flesh* is a prediction that Gentiles as well as Jews would be called upon to accept the law of the Lord. That fact is predicted in Joel 2: 28 and quoted by Peter at Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 2: 17.

Verse 17. The general comment on this verse is that it is a description of some idol worshipers, and there is a prediction of the wrath of God that was going to come upon them. I shall explain the various terms used, some of which are unusual as they are rendered in the A. V. A *garden* was an enclosed place that was well adapted to such activities as religious services. Smith's Bible Dictionary says that "the retirement of gardens rendered them favorite places of devotion." Naturally they could be thus used by both true and heathen worshipers. *Tree* is not in the original but the word *one* is. The idea is that these idolatrous worshipers followed behind each other in unison to practice the same iniquity, as if they all had a mind to serve the same idol god. *Mouse* is from a Hebrew word that refers to any kind of unclean rodent. Worshipers of idols glorified in defying the law of God which forbade the use of any unclean creature, either as food or in sacrifice. These wicked people showed their devotion to idols by eating such abominable things as swines' flesh and these filthy rodents here translated *mice*. *Sanctify and purify themselves* refers to their preparation for the participation in these heathen abominations. All these *shall be consumed together* is the prediction of God's wrath upon the sinful nation, ending in their captivity by the Babylonians. This was to be fulfilled as recorded in 2 Ki. 24 and 25. But having made such a prediction against fleshly Israel, the prophet follows his usual style and jumps ahead to the time when spiritual Israel was to come into being and which was destined to include many people besides the Jews. This will be

introduced in the next few verses and comments offered thereon.

Verse 18. The first clause is still in reference to the shortcomings of fleshly Israel. Then the scene shifts to the time of the Christian Dispensation when the Lord was to bring in the Gentiles. This idea of dropping the exclusive favors to the Jews when they proved unworthy, and in their place putting the Gentiles is a well established subject in the Bible. This verse makes the complete exchange of nations and thus spans several hundreds of years of time in making the change. It will be well for the reader to study chapters 9 and 11 of Romans in connection with the matter of the respective standing of the Jews and Gentiles before God.

Verse 19. In the case of fleshly Israel there was a remnant who survived the effects of the captivity, and they were sent to Palestine to restore the institutions of the Lord. In that of spiritual Israel there were to be some who would *escape* (would react favorably) the contact with the sword of the Spirit. (At least three thousand, Acts 2: 41.) These were to be sent back to their homes in various parts of the world (here figuratively called Tarsish, Pul and Lud) to *draw the bow*, which means to spread the good tidings of their new-found religion which they learned in Jerusalem. These new converts were to tell the story of the cross among the Gentiles.

Verse 20. From here to the close of the book the prophet will be writing on the same subject that has been running through much of the preceding portions of the book. The outstanding feature of the few remaining verses will be that they will pertain to spiritual Israel exclusively. The apparent references to fleshly Israel will be only for the purpose of obtaining some figures of speech to use as illustrations (either by comparison or contrast) of the new system of salvation under Christ. *All your brethren and out of all nations* is plainly a prediction that the Gentiles would finally be admitted into the services under Christ. However, the new system was to be offered to the Jews first and to the Gentiles a few years later. Hence the first application of this verse is to the events that are recorded in Acts 2. One of the annual feasts of the Jews (Pentecost) was at hand, and all able-bodied men were required to go to Jerusalem on such occasions. (Ex. 23: 15-17; Deut. 16: 16.) The men only were required

to attend these feasts, but women were permitted and usually did come to Jerusalem on such occasions. The Lord took that occasion for the time of setting up the new institution since he wished to begin it with the services of the Jews only, and he knew that many of that race would be in the city, the place where the church was to be born. Thus our verse says the *children of Israel* will come to bring an offering *into the house of the Lord* which means the temple since that Jewish service will be still in force. These people literally traveled in such conveyances as are named here (see Acts 8: 27, 28), and Acts 2: 5 declares historically that many Jews were actually in Jerusalem at this time and that they had come from various nations.

Verse 21. Under the Mosaic system the tribe of Levi performed all of the general services about the tabernacle or temple. And the special services of the altars and other articles on the inside of these buildings were performed by the priests only, who also were of this tribe. This verse predicts that under Christ the people who will have become members of the new system, whether Jew or Gentile, will all be figuratively the priests and Levites. That means that under Christ there will not be any separate tribes nor any special class for priests. The whole brotherhood will form one tribe (with Christ as its head) and every member of it will be a priest. In other words, in the service of Christ there will be no class distinction but all will be expected to perform in the service according to ability and thus carry out the New Testament form of activities that will be genuine mutual ministry or mutual service. The religious priesthood under Christ is taught in 1 Pe. 2: 9; Rev. 1: 10; 5: 10.

Verse 22. This and the two following verses should be marked as a bracket and given the title "the kingdom of Christ." All of the many passages of the context go to show beyond any doubt that such title is a correct one. *New heavens and new earth* is the name of the system as a whole (see 2 Cor. 5: 17), and *your seed* refers to the individual Christians since they will have been begotten by the Word of God which is the seed of the kingdom (1 Pe. 1: 23). A wonderful truth and assurance may be seen in this verse. We have learned that the passage refers to the system of salvation under Christ and to the individuals living according to it. The prediction

is made that all this *SHALL REMAIN*. This is the assurance that regardless of all the opposition and persecution that may be waged against the church, it will continue to live until Christ comes again to deliver it up to his Father. Christianity shall never die but will continue to the end of this world which should be a sweet thought for all who are interested in the greatest of all subjects, the salvation of man through Christ. He taught the same truth in Luke 18: 8 where he declares that notwithstanding the hard times that would come, when he comes to the earth again he shall find faith on it. And in 1 Cor. 15: 51 and 1 Thess 4: 17 Paul refers to the people of Christ by the pronoun "we" and speaks of them as being on the earth when Jesus comes.

Verse 23. Under the Mosaic system the *new moon* was a monthly date and the regular Sabbath was a weekly date. There are no special days as dates in the Christian Dispensation, so the terms are used figuratively. The thought is that Christians will be expected to render service to Christ constantly, and not only on some particular days that may be convenient.

Verse 24. No physical violence was

to be used against those who resisted the claims of the Gospel, so the words are used figuratively because in former ages the Lord literally slew those who opposed his law. But Christians will be able to understand that men who refuse to bow to the will of Christ will be regarded as rebels in this life. If they continue in rebellion until death, they will be cast into the lake of fire where *their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched*. Jesus taught this same terrible truth in Mark 9: 43-48. *Shall be an abhorring unto all flesh*. There is no evidence that the saved in heaven will pay any attention to the thought of those who are in the lake of fire. Hence this prediction refers to the attitude that Christians will have toward those who are so disrespectful toward the God who gave them their existence as to live in sin. This great truth teaches that the followers of Christ have the right to be interested in the salvation of all men, but if they will persist in rebellion against the great Saviour of man, they should be looked upon as the wickedest of creatures and unworthy of the friendship of the faithful servants of the Son of God.