

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 139

Isaiah Chapter 51:1 – 52:12

Verse-by-verse

Verses 9-16:

Let's read the passage – **Isaiah 51:9-16**.

Isaiah appeals to **the arm of the LORD** to take action on behalf of captive Israel (verses 9-11). In former days, Isaiah recalls, the arm of the LORD delivered the sons of Israel out of Egypt. Now Isaiah pleads for the LORD to return the exiles to Zion.

This paragraph opens with an emotional appeal by Isaiah for the arm of the LORD to “awake, awake” . Isaiah speaks for a people who have grown weary waiting for the LORD to act on their behalf. But they have not lost all hope. They are hanging on to the promises that the LORD made to them.

Verse 9:

Last week, we examined what “the arm of the Lord” means in the Old Testament.

What does **Isaiah** reveal about the arm of the Lord? The image undergoes a transformation through three stages. It starts with the power and strength of the LORD in redeeming Israel from her enemies. From there the reach of the arm of the Lord extends to bring salvation to all the nations. Finally, Isaiah shows the arm of the LORD to be a Person: the Servant of the Lord – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tonight, we continue in verses 9-11.

Verses 9b-10 speak of the redemption of Israel from her enemies in the distant past (“days of old, generations of long ago”)– the Exodus from Egypt.

But first, we need to establish the identities of Rahab and the dragon in verse 9.

Rahab is a name for *Egypt*. See **Isaiah 30:7**.

The dragon refers to *the enemy of the Lord*. It is used as a metaphor for *Egypt* (**Psalms 74:10-14**) and for *Satan* (**Revelation 12:1-17**). In **Isaiah 27:1**, Leviathan/the serpent/the dragon refer to the enemies of the Lord who will be judged when the Lord returns to set up His kingdom (see context in **Isaiah 27:6,12-13**).

In verse 10, Isaiah appeals to the Lord who delivered the Jews out of Egypt. He split the Red Sea to make a path for the redeemed sons of Israel (**Exodus 14:13-22**).

In verse 11, Isaiah recites the Lord's promise that He will ransom His people from all the nations. They will return with joyful shouting to Zion. This refers to the regathering of Israel at the time of the Messianic Kingdom.

Verse 11 repeats word-for-word the promise of **Isaiah 35:10**. The context is the return of the Messiah, the Son of David, to establish His worldwide reign in Jerusalem. **Let's read Isaiah 35:1-10**.

So Isaiah's prayer is not limited to the return of the exiles from Babylon but extends to the Lord's final restoration of the redeemed to Zion. The removal of all sorrow refers to the time when there will no longer be afflictions or death. It is THIS day that Isaiah is asking the Lord to bring about in the near future.

In verses 12-16, the Lord answers Isaiah's prayer from verses 9-11.

Verses 12-13:

The Lord affirms that He is the One who redeemed His people from Egypt and who promises to redeem them again in the future. Then this passage picks up on the Lord's statement in verses 7-8, "do not fear the reproach of man". This time, however, the Lord asks them a question: ""Who are you that you are afraid of mere man who dies?" See also **Isaiah 40:6-8** and **Psalms 56:4,11**.

Then the Lord chastises them for forgetting Him. This is the reverse of **Isaiah 49:14**, where Zion accused the Lord of forgetting them. He is their Maker, and He created the heavens and the earth (see also **Psalms 104:1-5**). If they would keep remembering this, they would not live in fear of any oppressor.

But who is the oppressor in verse 13? Let's examine where else Isaiah speaks of an oppressor.

In **Isaiah 9:4**, the context is the future reign of the Messiah. In **Isaiah 14:4**, the oppressor is the king of Babylon. This refers not only to Nebuchadnezzar but also to satan (see **Isaiah 14:12-15**).

Elsewhere, in **Psalms 72:4**, the context is the Messianic reign also.

This suggests that the oppressor in **Isaiah 51:13** is the enemy that God will destroy right before the Lord establishes His kingdom.

Verses 14:

Soon after the oppressor is vanquished, the Lord will free the wandering exile.

But who is the exile in verse 14? Since the oppressor is the enemy that God destroys right before the kingdom begins, the exile here must refer to the people of Israel who are in exile at that time.

At that time, the Jews will be in exile in many nations of the earth.

So the freeing of the exile in verse 14 is the return of the Jews from every nation to Zion when the Messiah sets up His kingdom. See **Deuteronomy 30:1-5**; **Isaiah 11:10-12**; **Isaiah 43:5-7**; **Isaiah 49:11-13**; **Ezekiel 36:16-25**.