

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 109

Isaiah Chapter 48

Chapter 48 is the **climax** in this section of Isaiah: chapters 40-48. It is the summing up of what has come before, in chapters 40-47. Everything has pointed to the coming day of deliverance.

Yet this is not the end of the story. Chapter 48 ends in **verse 22** with a note of dark foreshadowing. The biggest problem of all for Israel – and for all people – has yet to be dealt with. And this is the problem of **sin**.

Chapter 48 also includes a note of bright foreshadowing. For out of the shadows, One briefly appears.

He is the Servant of the Lord, whom we last saw in chapter 42. Here in chapter 48, He appears in just one verse - **48:16**. But, starting in chapter 49, He will be the central figure of the remainder of the book.

Let's read Isaiah chapter 48 now.

The *overarching message* of chapters 40-48 is **the greatness and the glory of God compared to the uselessness of idols**.

The energy of chapter 48 is found in **verse 20**.

The motivation for the Lord's actions in chapter 48 is found in **verse 11**.

Chapter 48 has three sections:

	Marker	Message
Verses 1-11	“Hear this, O house of Jacob”	“For the sake of My name, I delay My wrath” (verse 9).
Verse 12-16	“Listen to Me, O Jacob	The LORD shall carry out His good pleasure on Babylon (verse 14).
Verses 17-22	“Thus says the Lord”	“Say, ‘The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob’” (verse 20)

Verse-by-verse

Verses 1-2: Isaiah cleverly draws out the utter hypocrisy of the leaders of Israel. For the first four lines of verse 1, it sounds like Isaiah is speaking favorably. But a closer look reveals that he only speaks about their forebears (Jacob and Judah) and their pronouncements (oaths to the Lord, invoking His name).

Thus, the last line of verse 1 is a dagger to the heart. They honor Him with their lips, but the hearts (no truth) and their deeds (righteousness) dishonor Him.

Their blatant hypocrisy continues in verse 2 along similar lines.

Verses 3-5: Remember – chapter 48 is the climax, the summing up of the first part (chapters 40-48) of the second half (chapters 40-66) of the prophetic book of Isaiah. In chapter 48, we find a restatement of themes found in chapters 40-47.

Here in verses 3-5, the Lord begins speaking.

The Lord gives His closing argument by restating what He said earlier. Only now He speaks in an **accusatory manner** to the stubborn, disobedient, rebellious nation of Israel (verse 4).

His first argument on His behalf is His unique ability to **foretell the future**. This has come up again and again in chapters 40-47. The “**former things**” are predictions that have already come to pass. He predicted them far in advance of their fulfillment, lest the proud idolaters attribute the miraculous deliverances to their idols.

The Lord does not say what these former things are. But many times in Israel’s past He did exactly this. He predicted or promised that He would rescue His people, and at the right time He came through in a miraculous fashion. We covered this in **chapter 46:8-11**. Let’s look at that passage again.

Psalm 105 spoke of the promise that the Lord gave **Abraham** that He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants. And hundreds of years later He did exactly that, when He brought the Israelites out of bondage from Egypt.

Verses 6-8: In light of all this evidence, the Lord exhorts Judah to admit the obvious: **Yahweh is the Lord and there is no other**. He does so in the form of a question. It is a question the people need to answer for themselves.

So much for the past. But the Lord is not finished.

He is going to do it again. He is now going to **proclaim new things** that they have never heard before. In other words, He is going to make new predictions that He promises to fulfill sometime in the future. Until now they have been hidden in the mind of God. Isaiah spoke of new things earlier in **Isaiah 42:9**.

The Lord does not identify what these new things are, at least not in this passage. But read on! When we begin the second part of the second half of the book of Isaiah, chapters 49-57, I will show you the overall flow of chapters 40-66. You will see the marvelous unfolding of the prophetic “new things”.

The Lord hid these things from Israel because He knew their hearts. It wouldn't have made any difference. They would have become even more arrogant and more wicked. They would not have acknowledged the greatness of God or His word. They would have attributed these never before-seen or heard wonders to their own idols, or perhaps to their own practice of dead religion (see **Isaiah 1:10-15**).

They would still have refused to believe God's word. They would not have turned to the Lord. Their treachery, their rebellion would have increased. They would have consorted with idols even more (if that were possible)! See **Jeremiah 3:6-10**. So the Lord hid these “new things”, lest He cast these pearls before swine. (**Matt 7:6**).

Verses 9-11: So there is nothing good about the nation of Judah that would cause the Lord to delay His wrath. They are full of unrighteousness and lies. So now He must act on His own behalf.

We will pick things up here next week.