

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 110

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

Let's read Isaiah chapter 48 now.

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.

Verses 3-5: 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. “Will you not declare it? “It” refers to the former things. The Lord predicted them long ago, and then He brought them to pass.

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

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 at some time 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 they can be inferred from the context. Passages in this section of Isaiah suggest that one new thing *is the deliverance of Israel from Babylon by the Gentile ruler Cyrus (Isaiah 43:18-20, 45:11-17; 48:14-15, 20)*.

Beyond that, chapters 49-57 reveal a second, more glorious new thing: *the deliverance of the human race from sin by the Suffering Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 49:5-7)*.

And chapters 65 and 66 speak of a third new thing in far distant future: *the creation of the new heavens and the new earth (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22)*.

The Lord hid these things from Israel because He knew their hearts: They were arrogant and 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 practice of dead religion (see **Isaiah 1:10-15**). So first the Lord God had to test them in the “furnace of affliction”, as in **Isaiah 43:27-28**.

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.

But what is the “furnace of affliction”?

The Old Testament refers to **Egypt** as the *iron furnace* (**Deuteronomy 4:20, Jeremiah 11:4**). Elsewhere, the furnace refers to **the Lord's anger** (**Ezekiel 22:20,22**). And **Proverbs 17:3** compares the **Lord testing hearts** to the *furnace testing gold and silver*.

Verses 12-16: Next, the Lord makes His second argument: He is **the Creator of all things**.

In verse 14, “them” refers to the stars and the other celestial bodies in the heavens. And “him” is Cyrus.

In verse 16, the first three lines are clearly spoken by the Lord God. He commands His people to listen to Him, as in verses 12 and 14, which are definitely spoken by the Lord God – the first and the last, the Creator. And in verse 16 the Speaker says that He spoke “from the first” and was there for the creation.

But what is going on in the last line of verse 16? There is a sudden, unexpected development. The Speaker – the Lord God – now says that the Lord God has sent Him along with His Spirit! He is the Servant of the Lord, whom we last saw in chapter 42. In chapter 49, He will take center stage.

This last line of verse 16 describes the Trinity: **the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**.

Verses 17-22: We will pick things up here next week.