

Thursday Evening Bible Study
Series: The Book of Isaiah

Teaching Summary for Week 111

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**.

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 is now going to **proclaim new things** that they have never heard before. 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 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: The Lord now makes His second argument: He is **the Creator of all things**.

Verse 12 is a repetition of verse 1. He is the first and the last. Before the world was, He is. And He will remain forever. Verse 13 provides a powerful visual image of the Lord’s sovereignty and creative power.

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 is one of the few OT passages which describe the Trinity: **the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

Verses 17-22: The Lord continues to speak. Only now He addresses the future exiles in Babylon. First, He laments their past disobedience (in verses 17-19). Then suddenly, the Lord rescues them! He implores them to leave Babylon, and to joyfully declare to the whole world that the Lord has redeemed them!

In **verse 17**, the Lord tells the Jews that He is (1) their Redeemer, (2) the Holy One of Israel, (3) their God, (4) their teacher, and (5) their leader.....NOT their idols! See **Isaiah 49:9-10.**

In **verses 18 and 19**, the Lord looks back to all of the generations of Israel who rejected His word and disobeyed His commands (**Deuteronomy 5:29**). If only **Psalm 81:8-16.**

But now these blessings won't come to pass until the Messianic Kingdom comes.

“well -being” see **Isaiah 32:15-20; 66:12.** “righteousness” see **Isaiah 61:10-11; 62:1-2; Amos 5:24.**

“name” see **Isaiah 66:22.**

Their descendants as the sands of the sea - the promise that the Lord made to Abraham (**Genesis 22:17**).

But now, because of their disobedience, their name has been cut off and Jerusalem has been destroyed.

So the promise to Abraham won't be fulfilled until the Kingdom Reign of Christ. The Lord's promises to David will also be fulfilled at that time. See **Isaiah 44:3-4; 54:1-4; Jeremiah 33:22**.

In **verse 20**, we reach the climax of this chapter and chapters 40-48. This is a summons beforehand to the Jews who would be captives in 539 BC. The moment has arrived. The Lord's agent, Cyrus, has defeated the Babylonians. The Lord issues the command: move out! Take advantage of the edict of Cyrus and return in joy to Judah. Tell the Gentiles about the Lord's grace and power. See **Jeremiah 51:6; Zechariah 2:6-7**.

In **verse 21**, Isaiah harkens back to the Exodus from Egypt. He is asking the Jews to recall the Lord's mercy and provision then. The Lord provided water in the desert and water out of the rock. He did so in the former times (**Exodus 17:6-7 – Meribah; Psalm 78:15-16,20; Psalm 105:41**). He would do so again. See **Isaiah 35:6-7; 41:17-20; 43:19-20 – the rescue from Babylon; Isaiah 49:10 – Messianic Kingdom**.

Verse 22 is a somewhat surprising ending, until you realize that the disobedience of the Jews would not end with the end of the Babylonian Captivity but would continue unabated. Only a minority would flee to Zion.

Military deliverance is one thing. But they (and all men) need to be redeemed from their sins. This sets the stage for the arrival of the Suffering Servant - our Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

Next time we begin the second section of Isaiah 40-66: chapters 49-57. This section will end with the same statement as Isaiah 48:22. See **Isaiah 57:21**.