

Isaiah 1-61 Devotionals-Howard Morrison

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REFLECTIONS ON ISAIAH

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INTRODUCTION: You are encouraged to read these devotionals on Isaiah, but please do not let them be a substitute for reading the actual words of the prophet Isaiah. Why not read through Isaiah slowly, taking time to write down your observations (especially answers to the who, what, where, when, why, how type of questions-see notes), summarizing the theme of the chapter (give each chapter a unique title that relates to and identifies the theme) and then read the respective devotional for additional insights. You may (will) not understand every aspect of Isaiah's profound prophecy, but you can rest assured that if you undertake this endeavor, you will come to know your God better and will find yourself growing in the "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18-note). Enjoy!

Below is a brief overview chart to help guide you as you read through Isaiah.

THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH						
JUDGMENT OF GOD				COMFORT OF GOD		
God's Government God's Holiness, Righteousness and Justice				God's Grace God's Grace, Compassion and Glory		
Judah Prophecies Isa 1-12	Foreign Prophecies Isa 13-27	Warnings & Promises Isa 28-35	Historical Section Isa 36-39	Redemption Promised Isa 40-48	Redemption Provided Isa 49-57	Redemption Realized Isa 58-66
Adapted from Irving Jensen's highly recommended book "Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament"						

WHY STUDY AN

OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET?

I have been intimidated by the Book of Isaiah. I've read it before several times and I was still intimidated. So I decided to tackle it. Why? Well, actually the New Testament tells us why.

Luke 24:27 "...And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself."

Man, to be present to hear THAT sermon. Best one on the Old Testament ever delivered! But of course the Holy Spirit is alive and powerful and is in the business of revealing the truth of Scriptures to us, so the process is well worth it!

Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

All of us can use a little more hope. This verse tells us it is available through the Old Testament. So, the process is well worth it!

1Corinthians 10:6, 11, "Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things...and they were written for our instruction..."

My cravings are not always in line with purity and I still need instruction. We'll watch some examples not merely from a distance but up close and personal. So, again, the process will be worth it!

Heb 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Isaiah has a major emphasis on the Servant of the LORD to come. We can learn much about our Savior by absorbing the message of Isaiah.

1 Peter 1:10,12, "...the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you...It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you..."

These writers actually had US in mind. With Isaiah having so much prophecy and many promises it will certainly be a valuable exercise to dwell in the Word with the Holy One of Israel present guiding us along the way.

Let's get started!

Howard Morrison, 2009

ISAIAH 1 DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah 1 - A CHAPTER OF FIRSTS

The word "will" is the most often used word in Isaiah, as in "**will**", "**will be**", "**will not**", or "**will never**". **Will** is used over 1,200 times in Isaiah in the New International Version. It's first uses are in Isaiah 1:15,

"When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean..."

Obviously there are the more mundane uses of the word, but even if you remove those uses, you cannot read Isaiah without coming face to face with a promise making God, with a God who is not afraid to put His character on the line by making bold prophecies (hundreds of them), and with a covenant making God. (I have not done an exhaustive study on the prophecies/promises of God in the book of Isaiah. I'm sure someone else has done that and I can't wait to see their results.)

Other examples of repetition include the use of **LORD** or **Lord**, 492 times in the book (an average of over 7 times per chapter).

Isaiah 1:2,

"...For the LORD has spoken: 'I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against Me.'"

Much is made within this book of "**the day**", "**that day**", "**days**", or "**last days**" which add up to 161 times. It's first use in Isaiah 1:26,

“I will restore your judges as in the days of old...”

This use is a bit more pedantic with many more of them involved with future events, as in Isa 2:2,

“In the last days, the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established...”

“**Come**” is introduced in Isa 1:10 and again in Isa 1:18 (our key verse mentioned in my previous Reflection). It is used over 100 times in Isaiah.

Jerusalem and Zion are used 95 times with its first use in 1:1,

“The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw...”

Obviously some references are extremely significant even though their repetition is fewer than others. For example, “**the Holy One of Israel**” is mentioned 26 times in Isaiah but only six other times in the rest of Scripture (Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14, 15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14).

This all begins in Isaiah 1:4...

“They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on Him.”

The list goes on and on: **nation** or **nations** (87) in Isa 2:2, **land** (81) in Isa 1:19, **call/calls/called** (65) in Isa 1:26, **king** (61) in Isa 6:1, **salvation** (59) in Isa 12:2, **I am** (55), etc.

My desire is to discover God’s truth and the importance He places on certain things in this book. These repetitions most certainly are clues. Can this kind of study bog down into biblical trivia? Of course it can. Can it be infused with Spirit given power? I absolutely believe so. I pursue the latter!

Luke 24:27 “...And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.”

ISAIAH 2 DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah 2:1-4 “...In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and peoples will stream to it. 2 Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 3 He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

I’m told a portion of this verse is on the wall at the United Nations. Unfortunately, it stands as a monument to man’s effort to save man. The assumption is “Certainly we have evolved to the point where we can all get along. See, even the Bible says there will be a day when we can set aside our differences, live in harmony with each other, and settle things amicably.” It is the mantra of man’s opinion of the greatness of man.

Unfortunately, it also stands as a monument to terrible exegesis.

First, we will see in our study of the book that the term “**last days**” is applied to God’s future reign here on earth referred to as the millennium. It has nothing to do with the reign of man over mankind.

Second, the temple will be rebuilt, Israel will be the focus, and all the nations will be gathered in Israel. (I don’t think that is a part of the UN’s plan for the world. Too Semitic!) Isaiah 2:2 of course says that this gathering will come with worship and a bending of the knee to the LORD, to be taught by Him. That is far from what the UN had in mind when it placed part of verse 3 on its walls. They aren’t hoping for mass conversion to Yahweh worship.

Third, Isaiah 2:3 says this is God Himself who will settle disputes between nations. There won’t be any multi-nation tribunal to settle matters. God Himself will reign.

Finally, the laying down of weapons will be accomplished because this will be a day that the LORD has established (not by the use of a UN peace keeping force). There will be a genuine uniting of nations, but not because of the efforts of man. God is indeed the only One big enough to accomplish it.

This will be a work of God, not man. God will receive the glory, not man.

ISAIAH - SPLENDOR

God is described in many fascinating ways in the book of Isaiah. One of my favorites shows up early in the book.

Isaiah 2:10, Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty!

And as if we really needed to catch what He is saying it is repeated in Isa 2:19 and Isa 2:21! The splendor of His majesty. What a great book title that would be. But what does it mean? We don't say splendid that often and when we do it sounds a bit old fashioned or formal. And splendor is just plain missing in our everyday language.

In Isaiah 2:10 the wicked find themselves running in fear from God. For those of us who find ourselves having received His righteousness and therefore able to be in His presence (and have His presence with us) we find the splendor of the King a glorious thought. Glorious. That is a great reaction because it is one of the basic meanings of the word splendor, along with honor, beauty, and excellency and magnificence. The breadth of terms to describe the meaning of splendor gives us a hint that it is a hard job to describe the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. (Isa 35:2c).

A common biblical approach to describing God is to string characteristics together. It is as if the author is trying to describe a multi-faceted diamond and can only begin by mentioning the fullness of all he sees, as in, I am bringing My righteousness near, it is not far away; and My salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, My splendor to Israel (Isa 46:13). Righteousness and salvation.

What a wonderful thought that God would share some of this splendor with His people.

Isaiah 49:3, He said to me, "You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will display My splendor."

Isaiah 55:5, Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for He has endowed you with splendor ."

Isaiah 60:20, 21, Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. 21 Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever. They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of My splendor.

And in one of the most beautiful descriptions of Israel...

Isa 62:3, You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

In GREAT CONTRAST we find an amazing description of the Suffering Servant. He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him (53:20). The suffering servant didn't display this splendor in His earthly body during His first visit. Certainly this is a part of what Paul meant when he said,

(He) did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself... (Phil 2:6-8).

Splendor was one of the divine characteristic that Jesus left behind, only to regain it at His resurrection, and will one day again be displayed in Himself and in His people.

**The Splendor of the King, Clothed in Majesty,
let all the earth rejoice, let all the earth rejoice.
How great is our God.**

ISAIAH 3 DEVOTIONAL

A core message of the book of Isaiah is one of judgment. That makes the book hard to read. But in the words of Henri Nouwen, we must also let the book read us!

Isaiah 3:8-11, "Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling; their words and deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence. 9 The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves. 10 Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. 11 Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done."

Isaiah 3:8

God doesn't mince words in including His own people in His divine judgment. Israel stood against God in word and deed (Isa 3:8). (Do I?)

I find these words incredible, "defying His glorious presence" (Isa 3:8). (Where do I know God is present and yet choose to walk into sin? Oh, God, thank you for forgiveness.)

Isaiah 3:9

The very look on their faces (Isa 3:9) gave away the condition of their heart. I know that my face often expresses the reality of my heart and it isn't pretty. (My wife has had to live with this for 25 years! Talk about longsuffering...) My face often expresses displeasure, disappointment, impatience, discouragement. It is amazing to think that Christ's face NEVER expressed any sin (not that it didn't express genuine disappointment, hurt, righteous anger, etc.). (Please, God, make my face more like Yours!)

Isaiah 3:10

There is grace for the righteous (those found in Christ) and there is all the fullness of blessing to enjoy (Isa 3:10). Even though I have complete confidence that I am in Christ and will be found in Him because of His sustaining power, I nevertheless must call my sin what it is and live in daily gratitude for forgiveness and the ongoing sanctifying work that is being orchestrated by His powerful Holy Spirit.

ISAIAH - LEADERS

Why had Israel (and other nations) gone astray in the period of Israel's history leading up to the writing of Isaiah?

The Book of Isaiah certainly teaches personal responsibility. But, I have also been intrigued by God's posture toward the leaders of the nation.

Interestingly, God doesn't have much to say about the specific kings of Israel (with the exception of Hezekiah in Isaiah 36-38). God saves His choicest words for the spiritual guides, leaders, and elders of His people.

Isaiah 1:23, "Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them."

These are harsh words of condemnation, both for their offences and their omissions.

How bad did it get?

Isaiah 3:12, "Youths oppress My people, women rule over them. O My people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path."

Some models of obedience, huh? In some cases the leaders were just plain drunkards.

Isaiah 28:7, "...Priests and prophets stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine; they reel from beer, ..."

Their leaders turned them away from the Law and obedience. In some cases those not intended to bear the responsibility of such leadership had been forced into service (children and women, see Isa 3:4 also).

God's judgment of this situation is crystal clear. God's main concern is for the abuse of leadership. They had become corrupt and led the people poorly. His main accusation is their lack of attention to the poor and the oppressed among them. In fact the leaders themselves had instead become the oppressors.

Isaiah 3:14-15 "The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of His people: "It is you who have ruined My vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. 15 What do you mean by crushing My people and grinding the faces of the poor?" declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty."

(It is a whole study in itself, but please note those who were listed as being trampled upon: fatherless (orphan), widow, young, women, and poor. These are the ones most needful of righteous protection and least able to provide it for themselves. It ought to break our hearts. I have friends and relatives working among the orphans around the world and among those forced into human trafficking. May God bless and multiply their efforts.)

So, what will God do about these wicked leaders?

"So the Lord will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day; the elders and prominent men are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail. Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray" (Isaiah 9:14-16).

God is certainly disappointed in this kind of leadership and judges it severely.

"He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff" (Isa 40:23, 24).

I believe there are many lessons to be learned from this by spiritual leaders today.

"As the leadership goes so goes the people."

So, I have to ask myself, "How am I doing? Do I lead people astray? Am I in fact in rebellion against the very One I claim to love and serve? Am I neglecting care for those in most need?"

Fortunately, we have an ultimate Ruler, a King, to whom we bend the knee.

Isaiah 44:6 "This is what the Lord says — Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God"

And one day all this will change and our spiritual leadership will be pure.

Isaiah 32:1, "See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice."

Isaiah 33:17, "Your eyes will see the king in His beauty..."

Isaiah 49:7, "...to Him...: 'Kings will see You and arise, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, ..."

The weight of leading others spiritually is heavy. It brings extra responsibility and scrutiny. Beware. God will not be mocked by those who claim to lead others yet live a life which betrays those they lead and the One who they are to be following.

ISAIAH 4 DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah 4:2, "In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel."

Many interpreters look at this verse as one of the first references to be found in the book of Isaiah to the coming Messiah. "Branch of the LORD" could be referring to the Messiah and Jeremiah (Jer 23:5; 33:15) and Zechariah (Zech 3:8; 6:12) certainly add biblically to this argument. These later prophets are a bit more clear that they are referring to an individual. Isaiah is more vague than we would like as to whom or what he is referring.

(It is interesting to me coming from an agricultural background that in this very same verse is found a reference to restored agricultural prosperity to the nation of Israel.)

One of my Hebrew professors in graduate school lists twenty two specific prophecies of the coming Messiah in the book of Isaiah. Many of them are familiar (born of a virgin and called Immanuel, Is 7:14; descendant of Jesse and the Davidic line, Is 11:1,10; voluntarily submits to suffering, Is 50:6; Is 53:7, 8; takes on Himself the sins of the world, Is 53:4, 5, 6; 10, 11, 12). Others are not so familiar but are all the same very important (has a divine nature, Is 9:6; called by God before His birth, Is 49:1; empowered by the Holy Spirit, Is 11:2; Is 42:1; will be gentle toward the weak, Is 42:3; will bring joy to Israel, Is 9:2; will be a light to the Gentles, Is 42:6; Is 49:6; will judge in righteousness, justice, and faithfulness, Is 11:3, 4, 5; Is 42:1,4).

We will see some of these characteristics as we travel through the book. I love the simplicity of this first reference in the book to the Messiah: "...the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious..." And, yes, He is! Beautiful in Who He is and what He does. Glorious in Who He is and What He does.

I'm wondering. Do you (and I) spend time basking in His beauty and glory? Do we enjoy His beauty and glory? Do we call upon Him to act consistent with His beauty and glory?

ISAIAH 5 DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah chapter 5 begins with a song of the vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7). The vineyard is one of God's favorite word pictures for Israel. He clearly states this in Isaiah 5:7,

"The vineyard of the LORD almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of His delight..."

God established this vineyard for Himself (Isaiah 5:1-4, 7). We are going to look at it more closely in a moment. But, God also talks about the systematic dismantling of this vineyard as well, due to their disobedience (Isaiah 5:5-6, 8-30). God is both One before whom we should be in awe for His goodness and also One to be feared.

In establishing His vineyard God says He: owned it (Is 5:1), placed it on a fertile hillside (Is 5:1), dug it up (Is 5:2), cleared it (Is 5:2), planted choicest vines (Is 5:2), built a watchtower (Is 5:2), and then looked for fruitfulness (Is 5:2). Nothing more could have been done (Is 5:4).

Clearly these verses are directed at Israel, His people. Nevertheless, in application, is it going too far to say that God owns me, made me a soil that would respond, took the time to make my soul ripe to respond, planted the seed of His Word, has been watching over me so Satan wouldn't claim me, and now wants my obedience?

These things are certainly taught in the New Testament. It may be a bit too much to read all of this back into God's previous covenant of relating to His people. But, it seems apparent that this work of God in our lives is at least consistent with His character and is either a foreshadowing of His new covenant or a direct reflection of how God has always viewed the relationship with His people.

No wonder Isaiah says He loves God?

"I will sing to the one I love a song about His vineyard:..." (Isa 5:1)

God does the work. He does the preparing. He plants. He grows. He protects. He brings fruitfulness. Then He looks for obedience that reflects itself in justice and righteousness. "...And He looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress" (Isaiah 5:7b). The judgment Israel experienced was due to their lack of response to the God who owned them.

What does God see in me in response to His work in my life?

ISAIAH 6 DEVOTIONAL

This is one of the most recognizable chapters in the book of Isaiah. My intent is not to make commentary of it as a whole. Many others are more qualified than I to do so. But I do have one primary thought.

Most preachers focus on Isaiah: the recognition of his unworthiness to be in God's presence, God cleansing him with a burning coal touched to his tongue, followed by Isaiah's offer to be used.

I would say that most teaching, though, fails to look enough (in my opinion) at the Lord seated on the throne.

When one starts to take a close look, this revelation in verses 1-6 raises more questions than it answers.

We long to know what heaven is like. Is this an accurate/complete picture of heaven?

The "Lord" reveals Himself to Isaiah. Is this the Father or the Son?

God speaks to Isaiah. Is this a dream? Trance? Here on earth? Was Isaiah transported to heaven like John was to receive The Revelation?

God is in the temple complete with doorposts and thresholds. Is this in Jerusalem? Is this a temple in heaven? How physical is this in reality?

One day we'll see clearly. For now we take God directly at His Word for we can take it no other way. God reveals Himself this way for a reason(s). My tendency is to believe these are reflections of what heaven will be like ("now we see as if in a mirror dimly"). The real thing will be much grander, but God (the Infinite One) can only reveal Himself to finite beings in ways humans can understand. We could not understand Him any other way. So how He reveals Himself here is absolutely accurate and is all we need (for now).

Everything about Isaiah 6:1-6 speaks to God's holiness.

Either the Lord is present with Isaiah or Isaiah is brought into the presence of God but either way it is into an environment of holiness.

The Lord is seated on a throne. He is the only one worthy to be so seated.

Either He or the throne is properly high and exalted. It is the only place appropriate for One who is holy.

The extent of His robe fills the temple. I believe this reflects the overflow of His character. His robe, symbol of His rank, has no end. Nothing can contain Him or accurately reflect all that He is.

Seraphs accompany Him. He is truly worth as the holy One to be worshipped by all creation. Their posture depicts His worthiness and their unworthiness, but nevertheless they can't help but be close and worship.

They called out "holy, holy, holy". It is interesting to me that this theme may have come out of Psalm 99:3,5,9 and it also reflects itself on into eternity as revealed in Revelation 4:8. God's creation when put in God's presence can't help but verbally reflect the character they see in the Lord and it is holiness.

Bob Lepine (FamilyLife Ministries) is the only person I know who has taught through Isaiah chapter by chapter (of course there are many fine written commentaries on the book) and I'm indebted to him for the following insights:

"The God of Scripture is first and foremost a holy God. His love is a holy love. His mercy is a holy mercy. His justice is a holy justice. His righteousness is a holy righteousness. Where He stands is holy ground. He dwells on His holy mountain and is worshipped in His holy temple. His name is holy. His law is holy, and those who are his followers are a holy nation. All His works and all His words and all His ways are holy....You may have always thought of God first and foremost as a loving God. While God's love, His grace and His mercy are seen clearly and powerfully in scripture, they flow from God's holiness... Nowhere is he called The Loving One. His Spirit is His Holy Spirit, not His Loving Spirit."

And finally, Isaiah's response is to proclaim "woe" on himself. There is much woe pronounced in the book of Isaiah. Here Isaiah says it of himself. "Woe is me. I'm undone. I can't stand in the presence of such a Holy One. I shouldn't be able to remain here. This is a Holy place and I'm anything but holy."

These six verses are drenched in the holiness of God. No wonder Isaiah's favorite description (as opposed to a name or title) of God is the **Holy One of Israel**. He uses it 30 times in this book. (It is used only 6 times outside of Isaiah. - Lev 16:17; 2 Kgs 19:22; Ps 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23; 30:11f, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14f; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9, 14; Jer 50:29; 51:5; Ezek 39:7; Hos 11:12)

Isaiah was clearly marked by this experience. He was brought face to face (to the degree that anyone can be) with the HOLY One of Israel... the LORD our God.

My response should be similar to Isaiah's (humility, bowed, awed, "woed" (as in woe is me), and eventually 'here am I, send me.) But my focus should not be on me but on the Holy One.

ISAIAH - MORE ON HOLINESS

As previously mentioned, Isaiah was somehow brought into the presence of God and responded in amazing fashion. Isaiah never recovered from having been called by the Holy One of Israel. Holiness is Isaiah's indelible impression of God. Holiness forever flavors Isaiah's view of the Creator. It wouldn't surprise us then to see holiness reflected in the rest of the book.

When you look at all the references to holy or holiness it is as if everything associated with God becomes holy. His people are His holy ones (Is 4:3; 13:3; 62:12). His feasts are holy (Is 30:29). His temple is holy (Is 64:11). Even His day, the Sabbath, is holy.

"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, ..." (Isa 58:13).

In what I believe is a reference to all of God's works or at least His ability to work His will, God's arm is holy.

"The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God" (Is 52:10).

Why is it that everything directly connected to God becomes holy? I believe this has to do with two things. First of all, God can't act any other way. All His actions are holy.

"But the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness" (Is 5:16).

"When they see among them their children, the work of my hands, they will keep my name holy; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob, and will stand in awe of the God of Israel" (Is 29:23).

This is a virtual double-whammy. His name is holy because He is filled with holiness. And yes, our appropriate response is to stand (or bow) in awe of Him.

Second, I believe all God touches is holy because of His presence. Because of His character, He CANNOT be in the presence of un-holiness. Heaven itself is called holy (Is 63:15) because God's presence is there. Therefore, wherever God is, is holy. This is most directly reflected in Isaiah by his single most common reference to something that is holy and that is His holy mountain (or Jerusalem).

"They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:9).

This is merely the first of a total of ten references to His holy mountain (see also Is 27:13; 38:2; 52:1; 56:7; 57:13; 63:18; 65:11, 25; 66:20). Why is Jerusalem the location of His holy mountain? Because of His presence. That is where He chose to have the temple built to house His presence among Israel, or at least His demonstrated presence. And what is the specific place in the temple called which houses His presence?... the holy of holies or the Most Holy place (Exodus 26:33,34)!

Isaiah records that God never intended for this to be the ONLY place of His presence. He also abides ... well, frankly, wherever He chooses to abide.

"...But the man who makes Me His refuge will inherit the land and possess my holy mountain.... 15 For this is what the high and lofty One says — He who lives forever, whose name is holy : "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Is 57:13,15).

God's presence touches and makes things holy. We know this is through His Spirit and it would only be consistent that in the one direct reference to the Spirit (other than the description of 'My Spirit') the book of Isaiah He is referred to as the Holy Spirit (Is 63:10,11).

Thus, Isaiah has recorded God's word faithfully which directs us to the very character of God. This should elicit a certain reverence, rest, or fear of Him who has come close to save us. "The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy , He is the one you are to fear, He is the one you are to dread,..." (Is 8:13).

So, we do that very thing and join in with all creation saying,

"Holy , holy , holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa 6:3).

Related Resource: Holiness of God

ISAIAH 7 DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah chapter seven has a couple pieces of interesting biblical trivia. Of course I only use that phrase from a human perspective. Nothing in Scripture is unimportant or included merely for our fascination. There may be things for which we don't know its full significance, but God has gone to a whole lot of trouble to preserve Scripture exactly as it is, for very good reasons, even if we don't know those reasons.

A case in point. In Isa 7:18, it is said that,

"In that day the LORD will whistle for flies from the distant streams of Egypt and for bees from the land of Assyria."

God whistles? Who knew? This is clearly an anthropomorphism (attributing human attributes to God). It is sort of embarrassing to even read. But, God was not embarrassed to have this recorded this way. Why? I don't have a clue. He could clearly have used other words to describe calling "flies" and "bees" to come to Israel.

Another case in point. Did you know that Isaiah was a father? Yes. He had at least one son. His name was Shear-Jashub. Part of the significance of this is seen in the meaning of his son's name. It means "a remnant shall return". What a wonderful reminder to Isaiah and his family that God would hold onto Israel so closely that there would always remain a faithful remnant who would one day return to Israel in the midst of or following mass disobedience and exiles to other countries.

But I see in the chapter yet another significance to God recording that Isaiah had a son. Isaiah is a father in part to be able to relate to God the Father and to God the Son. Embedded in this chapter is the famous, almost iconoclastic verse,

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and the give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel" (Isa 7:14).

And while there certainly was an immediate context in Isaiah's day for the plain fulfillment of this verse, Matthew 1:22, 23 makes it clear that this was also intended to reflect a divine reality and plan that would ultimately be fulfilled through a human agent, Mary, a divine agent, the Holy Spirit, resulting in the arrival of the Incarnate One, God's very own son, the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus.

Any father is amazed at the birth of his child. He marvels at the wonder of nine months of gestation. He is appreciate of the amazing efforts of the mother. He is in awe of the process and adores the product. I'm glad Isaiah was a father. I'm thankful I am a father.

I'm all the more amazed and in awe of the process and product of God choosing to send His Son as fully God and fully man. The incarnation! Oh, the wonder of it all.

ISAIAH - THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14)... God with us! This is most frequently referred to during the Christmas season, celebrating the triune God's decision for the second person of the Trinity to take on human flesh in its fullness without losing His deity. The incarnation had many, many purposes, but one of the most important is found embodied in one of the names given the Messiah, that of Immanuel. God intended to show us exactly what it would be like for the transcendent God Creator to become like us in all ways except without sin. We LONG for Him to be present. He was. He is. He will always be.

A number of years ago I embarked on a yearlong study of this subject. I won't bore you with the details of that study, but it turned out to be one of my all time favorite studies and today is still one of the best jobs I've ever done of "original research". My attempt at tracing various themes through Isaiah practices many of the things I learned during that particular study.

So, what do we learn about God's presence if we only had Isaiah to study?

He is indeed present.

“Devise your (Assyria’s) strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us” (Isa 8:10).

“Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you” (Isa 12:6).

His presence is glorious (Isa 3:8).

His presence reveals His holiness (Isa 6:1-6).

And in what is possibly my favorite verse in all the Scriptures (at least in my top two or three),

“Do not fear for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isa 41:10).

(In just a few words God presents two commands, two reasons, and three promises.)

God promises His presence is with us when we face difficult situations.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;...”(Isa 43:2a).

In fact He commands us to move beyond our fear in the midst of these situations. His reason? Because He is present.

“Do not be afraid, for I am with you;...” (Isa 43:5 and also Isa 41:10).

There is a principle found in other places in Scripture that is also repeated here in Isaiah and that is the idea that God promises to go before us and He also follows us, using His presence as protection and guidance (fore and aft).

“I will go before you and will level the mountains;...” (Isa 45:2).

“...And the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard” (Isa 58:8b).

And in a reference that I believe is picked up by John in his gospel (no one can take them out of My hand),

“See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands;...” (Isa 49:16a).

You can’t get any closer to God than that!

When asking questions about God’s presence it would be logical to start with, “Where is God?” God specifically answers that. He is exalted, reigning on high as well as presence with us, both at the same time!

“For this is what the high and lofty One says – He who lives forever whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, and also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite’ (Isa 57:15).

I have studied the Holy Spirit’s presence and concluded that God has specifically described it in a variety of ways on purpose. One of those descriptions is that He is present through the Holy Spirit being upon us.

“...I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants” (Isa 44:3b).

“As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the LORD. “My Spirit who is on you, and My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth...” (Isa 59:21).

He also reveals that the Spirit would be upon the Messiah Isaiah 61:1 (quoted in Lk 4:17, 18, 19).

And in a corporate sense, He is among us.

“Where is He who set His Holy Spirit among them...” (Isa 63:11c)

So Isaiah describes God’s presence with us, on us, among us. (Later in Scripture we learn the Holy Spirit is also within us.)

That’s a lot to learn about God’s presence from just one book of the Bible...and there are 55 more books to go!

Immanuel – God with us! This is God’s choice. He has chosen to move toward us. It is His very nature to be close. He has even chosen it as one of His names. Therefore we need not fear.

ISAIAH 8 DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah didn't have a clue he would become so popular. No, he never was embraced by his immediate audience. He preached the same message for 60 years with little response.

But, wow, was he wildly popular 600 years later! Isaiah is the most often quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament. Chapter eight provides examples. In a span a fourteen verses, seven of them get quoted in multiple places within the books of Matthew, Romans, Hebrews, and 1 Peter.

I have always been curious as to God's use of "stone" or "rock" (and in extension "fortress" and "refuge"). Paul writes in Romans that Jesus is both the stumbling block AND the cornerstone. Paul gets his imagery of stumbling block from Isaiah 8:14,

"...but for both houses of Israel He will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall..."

And, Paul gets his imagery of Jesus as the cornerstone from Isaiah 28:16,

"...See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed."

Paul just puts the two ideas into one proximity, into one person.

We see two reactions to this stone/Person. To mix my metaphors a bit here, some 'kick against the goad' and find themselves stumbling, falling. For them "...He will be a trap and a snare. Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured" (8:14b-15). These are sobering consequences. We know man is responsible for his own sin. He deserves to experience the full weight of his sin.

Amazingly, though, this very same stone can be our "sure foundation" and for the one who trusts in Him he "will never be dismayed" (Is 28:16). Chapter eight certainly doesn't reveal all there is to know about this Cornerstone aspect, but it provides glimpses of hope...

"for God is with us" (Is 8:10);

"The LORD Almighty is the One you are to regard as holy, He is the one you are to fear..." (Is 8:13);

"...and He will be a sanctuary;... (Is 8:14);

"...I will put my trust in Him" (Is 8:17).

Praise God that Another has taken the weight and consequences of our sin away and put it on Himself.

Stumbling or standing. Falling under the weight of sin or falling upon the sure foundation. Snared or snatched up. Broken body or broken spirit (contrite heart). Spurring God's provision or stirred to respond in faith. Dismayed or never dismayed. Stumbling block or cornerstone.

**By God's grace I choose to trust...
And, you can quote me on that!**

ISAIAH - GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

It doesn't take long studying Isaiah before you see the sovereignty of God pop up everywhere. There are direct references and there are indirect references. I'll focus here primarily on the direct references. But let me point out that every time God says "I will" or "I will not" do such-and-such is an expression of His sovereignty. That is a total of at least 191 times! In addition, every time He has a command for His people, it is a reflection of His sovereignty over them/us. (Somebody else will have to read through the book and give me a count of all the commands. Any takers?)

In addition there are the eighteen references to one of God's titles "the Sovereign LORD" (NIV). The first mention of the Sovereign LORD is typical for the book in that it is about to record a quote from our LORD, "Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says:

"It will not take place, it will not happen,..." (Isa 7:7NIV)

In what is the most concentrated repetition of the use of this title we find

“The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue...wakens my ear to listen...The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears...the Sovereign LORD helps me...It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me” (Is 50:4NIV, Is 50:5NIV, Is 50:7NIV, Is 50:9NIV).

The word “sovereign” or “sovereignty” isn’t used outside of this title, but the concept is throughout the book. For example, if you have been following along and read chapter eight you would have come across Isa 8:10 which says,

“Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us” (also quoted in Matt 1:23).

We can make our plans and strategies, but they only stand by the sovereign will of God.

The flip flop is true, as well. No matter what God plans, it will absolutely, positively come to pass. No exceptions, no surprises.

“The LORD Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, as I have planned so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand...This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart Him?...’ ” (Isa 14:24,26, 27).

And again,

“...My purpose will stand and I will do all that I please.” (Isa 46:11).

That pretty much covers it all.

Nine different times there is a reference to God’s plan/promise which He revealed LONG AGO. There is something about the durability of God’s promises that demonstrate His control over all things. A quick example is God having predicted Sennacherib’s fall in Isa 37:26.

“Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass...”

Planned, ordained, brought to pass. (This reminds me of “Signed Sealed Delivered, I’m Yours”).

This provides us such confidence when we read the dozens and dozens of promises regarding future events.

“The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces;... ” (Is 25:8NIV; see also Rev. 21:4).

All of these are just as assured for us looking forward as His hundreds of past promises which have already come to pass.

How far does His sovereignty extend? God demonstrates that with a mere rebuke He can and does control the seas (Is 50:2b). By mere act of His will He clothes the sky with darkness (Is 50:3) and He can open ears to hear (Is 50:5). And in reference to His control over nations He says, “ ...so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations” (Is 61:11). (You would have to be sovereign to pull that off.)

Many of God’s characteristics are intertwined. It would not be surprising to find God’s power and His strength tied to His sovereignty. “...’Here is your God!’ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and His arm rules for Him....” (Is 40:9NIV, Is 40:10NIV).

What should our response be to learning at a deeper level that God is indeed sovereign? This characteristic of God is not merely to be relied upon but it elicits our praise.

“O LORD, You are My God; I will exalt You and praise Your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago” (Is 25:1).

The question should no longer be “Is God sovereign?” He has declared Himself and demonstrated Himself to indeed be in control. The remaining question is do I trust Him and believe that what pleases Him will be for my good? That is the nature of faith in and trust in our Sovereign LORD.

Related Resources:

**El Elyon - God Most High - Sovereign over All and for All Time
Sovereignty of God**

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” (Is 9:6, 7).

It is almost impossible for us today to hear these words without thinking of Christmas. (There is nothing wrong with that, but I wonder if we would learn still more if we could somehow think of these words for a while separate from Christmas hymns, narrations, and Christmas pageants.)

Beautiful words. Wonderful words. Familiar words. Words of hope. Words of anticipation. Words of promise.

Curious words (a child shouldering a government? Increasing with no end?)

“Too good to be true” words (justice and righteousness forever).

Nouns: Counselor, God, Father, Prince

Adjectives: Wonderful, Mighty, Everlasting, Peaceful

Messianic words.

Words that raise all kinds of questions. (Is the “us” everyone? When will this child take on the responsibilities of governing? How is a son also the Everlasting Father? When will all this “peace with no end” take place? How will this be accomplished? Who will call him these things?) (I believe I told you before that good Bible study often leaves us with more questions than it does answers.)

I love the phrase “the zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” It denotes His strength, His passion, His love for His Son, and His purpose.

“Father, thank you for sending Your Son. Thank you for Your promises of His kingdom that will one day reflect all You intend for Your children ‘from that time on and forever’. Thank You for being a zealous God for all that You intend to accomplish both in the life and work of Your Son and in my life, as well.”

ISAIAH - JOY AND REJOICING

Isaiah is seen almost universally as a book of judgment and understandable so. But don't think the book is absent of joy. Chapter nine begins the first of thirty two references to “joy” and twenty two more to the word “rejoice”.

“You have enlarged the nation and increased their **joy**; they **rejoice** before You as people **rejoice** at the harvest, as men **rejoice** when dividing the plunder” (Is 9:3).

That's a lot of joy and rejoicing for one verse, don't you think?

I'll try to, first, summarize Isaiah's teaching on joy and rejoicing and, second, include some of the verses from which these principles come.

A. Who rejoices?

God's people (9:3), the people of Zion (Is 12:6; 35:10; 52:8, 9); those whom God is among (Is 12:6); the ransomed (Is 35:10; 65:17, 18, 19); those who see His glory (44:2; 60:2-5)

The heavens (Is 44:2; 49:13), mountains, forests, and trees (Is 44:2; 48:20; 49:13; 55:12)

I do (Is 65:17, 18, 19)

B. How does joy happen?

God causes joy (Is 9:3; 56:7; 61:11)

Joy just happens (it overtakes us) (Is 35:10)

Found in keeping the Sabbath (Is 58:14)

C. Even though God causes joy, joy is nevertheless commanded

(Is 44:2; 49:13; 52:9; 65:18)

D. Why do we rejoice?

Because God has displayed His glory (Is 24:11, 12, 13, 14; 44:2; 60:2, 3, 4, 5)

Because of His comfort and compassion (Is 49:13; 52:8, 9)

Because of redemption (Is 49:8, 9; 61:10)

E. Not surprisingly, joy is tied closely to singing

(Is 12:6; 24:11, 12, 13, 14; 35:10; 44:2; 49:13; 65:14)

F. There's a whole lot of shoutin' goin' on

(Is 11:6; 26:19; 35:2; 24:11, 12, 13, 14; 44:2; 48:2; 49:13; 52:3-9; 55:12)

(It seems that if we aren't shoutin', then we aren't doin' joy right.) (On a side note: I believe the biblical definition of "rejoice" is "to sing and shout for joy". It may not be that fancy, but it is accurate.)

G. What happens when we rejoice?

It replaces sorrow and sighing (Is 35:10)

H. God rejoices, too

(Isaiah 62:5)

Here is my attempt to summarize Isaiah's teaching on joy... "God commands us to do that which He actually creates within us, that is the ability to shout and sing for joy along with all of creation (and God Himself!) because of His glory as reflected in His wonderful character and His work in our salvation."

Isa 12:6, "Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

Isa 35:10, "...and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. "

Isa 44:2, "Sing for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, He displays His glory in Israel."

Isa 49:13, "Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts His people and will have compassion on His afflicted ones."

Isa 52:8-9, "Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy. When the Lord returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes. 9 Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem."

Isa 55:12, "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

Isa 61:10-11, "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 11 For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations."

Isa 62:5, "As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you. "

Isa 65:17-19, "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. 18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. 19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more."

ISAIAH 10 DEVOTIONAL

Isa 10:20-22, "In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. 21 A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. 22 Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed overwhelming and righteous."

These would be the key verses (to me) in Isaiah 10. I've commented on them before under the subject of "the remnant" **See related resource on remnant**) I've repeated just a portion of that reflection here for your convenience.

"I've always been intrigued by the concept of the **remnant** of Israel. Much in prophetic study talks about a remnant. Chapter 4 of Isaiah contains an amazing statement.

"In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. 3 Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem" (Is 4:2,3).

In some places like these verses it appears this remnant will be "those who have remained faithful" while the others have turned away. In other verse we'll see these individuals appear to have come out of a reliance on the enemy and turned their allegiance/dependence back to the One true God.

In virtually all cases there is an emphasis on their presence in or returning to the land of Israel and Jerusalem in particular. I assume the returning to the land is a result of their first having turned their hearts back to Him. One reflects the other.

Isaiah 4:2-3 don't actually say "remnant", but other verses make the connection clear.

"In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. 21 A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. 22 Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return..." (Isa 10:20,21).

These verses were important to Paul since he quoted them in Ro 9:27, 28. In the future kingdom there will be those recognized out of Israel that are survivors, those who are left, those remaining. Their home will be Jerusalem. They will be lucky to be alive. And they are marked by holiness (faithful/righteous)."

God is VERY committed to this detail of Israel's future.

"Once more a remnant of the house of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" (Is 37:31, 32)."

ISAIAH 11 DEVOTIONAL

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse: from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – and He will delight in the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:1-3).

"In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him, and His place of rest will be glorious" (Isaiah 11:10).

We previously discussed Isaiah's look at the Messiah back in Is 4:2, 7:14, and Is 9:6, 7. This, then in chapter 11, would be the fourth major section focusing on the Messiah. There are at least twenty five references to the Messiah in this chapter alone. (I encourage you to read all of the chapter to gain a fuller picture.)

Looking at the passages I've copied above, the two major emphases here are His origin (from the tribe of Jesse...emphasizing his humanity) and His nature (having the Spirit of the Lord rest on Him...emphasizing His divinity).

Although not much is said here regarding the importance or implications of His coming from the line of Jesse, the line of David, it is full of meaning to the Old Testament reader, and should be to us as well. This is God's fulfillment of His promise, His covenant. This

is God's plan of salvation. This wasn't overlooked by the New Testament writers as they relied on it in Luke 3:22,23,32 and Acts 13:22, 23.

This Spirit is "of the LORD", clearly indicating the Father's full intention to endow the Messiah with power and authority. The Old Testament's primary view of the Spirit (but not the only view –see my previous thoughts on the presence of God) was that He came upon those God used. We see this fulfilled in part at Jesus' baptism when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus as if in the form of a dove.

This Spirit has certain characteristics: wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge and fear of the LORD. I know of no fuller description of the Holy Spirit's character in all of the Old Testament. But as is typical of the biblical record, these characteristics aren't included to draw undue attention to the Spirit but are meant to help us see more clearly who the Messiah would be, how He would be.

I love the description in Isaiah 11:10. The Messiah would be a banner for the people. Their covering, their protector. The nations will rally to Him. This has yet happen in all its fullness, but we see the spread of Christianity to thousands of people groups around the globe and its ever spreading nature as partial fulfillment of this promise.

I'm intrigued by the last phrase, "and His place of rest will be glorious." My wife, Jana, and I have just had a wonderful couple of weeks in some great places to rest. When I think of rest I think of peaceful, quiet, serene. I don't often think of "glorious". But of course, Jesus' place of rest would have to be glorious since He is glorious. You might be able to find some rest in a dark room, or a spot on your back porch, or in an office without interruption. I'm sure heaven will be glorious in all that we'll be able to enjoy with our new, resurrected bodies, but I sense that it will be truly glorious, not merely because of the yet to be created new heaven and earth, but primarily because of God's presence there.

When I first read this latter phrase I could only see that Jesus' place of rest would be glorious for Him, but the more I think about it, the more I realize it will be glorious for all of those He calls to join Him...to be with Him...Oh, what a glorious day.

ISAIAH - SPIRIT OF GOD

What? The Holy Spirit shows up in the Old Testament? You bet. And, in spades throughout the book of Isaiah. The clearest descriptions come with explicit references to the "Holy Spirit" as in Is 63:10, 11, but also in references to the "Spirit of the Lord" (Is 11:2; 63:14) and to "My Spirit" (Is 26:8 and five others). A study of these correspond to the previous work done on the "presence of God".

Clearly not all references to "spirit" in the book are references to the Holy Spirit. Many refer to a man's spirit, as in a man having a humble and contrite spirit (Is 26:9; 29:24; 38:16; 54:6; 57:15, 16; 61:3; 54:14; 66:2).

Some of the references are a bit obscure. For example,

"The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire" (Is 4:4).

Other passages are more clear show God sending a spirit for a specific purpose (Is 19:14; 37:7).

There is no doubting God has a Spirit and this Spirit is divine and He has a ministry of facilitating God's work among us. The character of the Holy Spirit is defined in Isaiah 11:2

"The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord — ..."

In addition 63:10 clearly states that this Spirit can be grieved, another aspect of His character. Other aspects include His being a Spirit of justice (Is 28:6) and one who provides rest (Is 63:14).

One of the more consistent descriptions of the Spirit's actions is represented by Is 32:15,

"...till the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,..."

This "pouring out upon" God's people is found elsewhere both in the book of Isaiah (44:3) and elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is the same description of God pouring His Spirit on His Servant/the Messiah. Isaiah 42:1 says,

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will

bring justice to the nations.”

Another common description of the Spirit’s work is being upon someone for the ability to speak for God. Isa 59:21,

“As for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord. “My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth,…”

Isa 61:1, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.”

Isaiah is one of the clearest writers in the Old Testament in providing us direct evidence of the Holy Spirit, His divine work, and His presence upon us.

ISAIAH

A GOD OF JUSTICE OR A GOD AGAINST INJUSTICE

One of the roles of the Messiah is to judge righteously.

Isa 11:3-5, “...He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; 4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. 5 Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.”

Note some of the characteristics of His judgment. First, His isn’t like man’s. He does not merely see with His eyes and hear with His ears. Instead, He will add into the mix righteousness and faithfulness.

But don’t miss that His judgment, even though laced with righteousness and faithfulness, indeed is severe. “He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.”

Isaiah certainly is a book regarding judgment of the nations and of God’s people. But, it is FILLED with the greater, overarching subject of God’s justice. (Hang on, this is longer than most.)

The Character of God

God demonstrates that He is a God of justice.

“Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!” Isa 30:18

Isa 61:8, “For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity.”

The Work of God

And out of His character He is committed to works of justice.

“The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them” (Isa 41:17).

Expectation of Leaders

He also expects those who represent Him (leaders) to lead/rule with justice.

Isa 25:4a, “You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.”

Isa 1:23, “Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow’s case does not come before them.”

Some of God’s harshest words are reserved for those who are in a position to help and either turn away, or incredibly, make matters worse,

“Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, 2 to deprive the poor of their

rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless" (Isa 10:1, 2).

So for us to claim that we follow God and not follow in His steps of justice, we face God's frustration, particularly when we call ourselves leaders.

"The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: "It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. 15 What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?" declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty" (Isa 3:14, 15).

Key Chapter

The single longest discussion of this topic in Isaiah is found in Isaiah 59:4, 8, 11, 14, 15. The chapter is a discussion of sin that is ever present before us. Among these offenses or iniquities is a lack of practicing justice.

"No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil." Is 59:4

"The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths..." Is 59:8a

"We look for justice but find none..." Is 59:11a

"...The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, and He was appalled that there was no one to intercede..." Is 59:15-16a

Great Expectations

God says that the practice of justice among the poor and oppressed is an indicator of our genuine spirituality. After chastising His people for going through the motions of fasting He says,

"Yet on the day of your fasting you do as you please and exploit all your workers...Is this the kind of fast I have chosen...? Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him,...?" (Is 58:2c, Is 58:4a, Is 58:5a, Is 58:6, 7a).

Rewards of obedience

And then to make His point crystal clear, God says that the joy of walking with God and answers to prayer are tied directly to our practice of justice.

"Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer you; and you will cry for help, and He will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, 10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. 11 The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. " (Is 58:8-11)

Action Steps

So, what should we do about it?

"...Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow" (Isa 1:16-17).

"This is what the Lord says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, or my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed" (Isa 56:1).

Let me be blunt: Followers of Christ should be at the forefront of community activities/ministries that focus on: the unborn, foster care, adoptions, single parenting, care of widows, genuine cases of amnesty, the persecuted Church, those false accused (particularly for their faith), homeless, the hungry, clean water, the basic needs of the poor. Not to be involved is a reflection of the shallowness of our understanding of who God is, who Jesus is, what He came to do, and what He wants to do in and through us.

ACT NOW. Not to be foolish. How is that?

Isaiah is very clear in providing us a very practical definition of a fool: the hungry and thirsty are left that way and the poor are

exploited.

"For the fool speaks folly, his mind is busy with evil: He practices ungodliness and spreads error concerning the Lord; the hungry he leaves empty and from the thirsty he withholds water. 7 The scoundrel's methods are wicked, he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just" (Isa 32:6,7).

If this stirs something in you, I encourage you to respond in some way immediately. First, consider a financial donation to a ministry that is already involved. Second, do some research of groups that are involved in some of these issues within ten miles of your home. Volunteer some time. Third, educate yourself in an even fuller biblical view of these issues.

ISAIAH 12 DEVOTIONAL

Chapter 12 of Isaiah is powerful even though it only has six verses...the shortest chapter of Isaiah.

Isaiah 12:1 In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. 2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. 5 Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. 6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

That's it. That is all there is to chapter 12. I view it a bit like Psalm 23: short, but it packs a wallop. I couldn't pick a favorite verse or two, so you get the whole thing this time.

There are at least three "firsts" in this chapter. Verse 1 is the first use of "praise" in the book of Isaiah. Is 12:2 is the first use of "comfort". (We won't hear it again until chapter 40.) Isaiah 12:2 is the first use of "salvation". Once he has used it, though, he can't get it off his mind, using it three times in two verses.

"in that day", Is 12:1, 4 – I praise God that I can say these words TODAY. I don't have to wait for another day to come

"You have comforted me" – Yes, He has. Whether it is in my weakness, insecurity, fear, loss, confusion, or anger, I have received comfort from my Lord.

"I will trust and not be afraid" – (anticipate a Reflection to come that ties these two together)

"God is my salvation" "He has become my salvation" – There is NO other source

"give thanks, call, make known, proclaim, sing, let this be known, should, sing", Isa 12:4-6 – These are all commands, with one primary purpose: we are to respond to God by telling others. And, this is to extend to "the nations", "all the world".

"the Holy One among you" – You know how I feel about the presence of God! (See former Reflection)

Full, rich verses, wouldn't you say?

ISAIAH - TRUSTING IN GOD

There are twelve key Passages in Isaiah on the topic of trust. Here they each are with some observations we can draw. Trust is a topic that only the Psalms and Jeremiah address with equal or more emphasis.

We tend to trust in man rather than in God. Man will fail us.

Isa 2:22, "Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he? "

Waiting seems to be a key component of trusting.

Isa 8:17, "I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him."

Sometimes people (ironically) rely on those who abuse authority over them.

Isa 10:20, "In that day the remnant of Israel, the survivors of the house of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel."

Trust chases away fear.

Isa 12:2, "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."

Trusting in other power leads to fear and shame. (Also, it is tempting to trust a big authority figure.)

Isa 20:5, "Those who trusted in Cush and boasted in Egypt will be afraid and put to shame. 6 In that day the people who live on this coast will say, 'See what has happened to those we relied on, those we fled to for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! How then can we escape?'"

Trusting is inexplicably tied to salvation.

Isa 25:9, "In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

God provides peace of mind to those who trust in Him. Interestingly, trust is something we are exhorted to do. Our trust is in the character of God (LORD, Rock eternal).

Isa 26:3, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal."

Relying on something other than God is the equivalent of rejecting what God has said about Himself. Relying on something else is a sin. Repentance, rest, salvation, quietness are tied together. Some choose to reject God's offer (It is implied they are trusting in something else).

Isa 30:12-15, "Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: "Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, 13 this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. 14 It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern. This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it."

Some have trusted in other sources (Egypt) and on human sources of strength (horses, chariots, horsemen, cp Ps 20:7). Trusting God here is synonymous to looking to Him for help.

Isa 31:1, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord. "

Some trust in idols. They will be found wanting.

Isa 42:17, "But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame."

Trust in self is at the end of the day trusting in our own wickedness. It is self deceiving. It will be found to lead to disaster (it doesn't work).

Isa 47:10, "You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.' 11 Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away. A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom; a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you. "

We are exhorted to trust and rely on God. The other option is to rely on your own self efforts which will lead to destruction.

Isa 50:10, "Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. 11 But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment."

ISAIAH 13 DEVOTIONAL

Isaiah 13 begins a long section of the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 13-23) that deals with judgments or prophecies against nine neighboring cities or countries. This section can be a bit tedious to read straight through and specific verses can be a challenge to interpret. The primary question for much this section is , “When will this take place?”

For example,

“Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty” (Is 13:6).

What does He mean by “near”? Was this something that Isaiah’s audience would live to see? Was it a warning for a future audience? Was it both? Is it an attitude all of should maintain no matter what its original intent may have been?

Following this verse is a series of proclamations/promises. There are 34 specific outcomes promised by the use of “will” or “will not” in this chapter alone!

My personal question is this: “What is it about the character and will of God that motivates Him to use language that states/implies nearness when from a human perspective it has turned out to be “so long”? He certainly knew it would create anticipation (a good thing) and at the same time create a disappointment (feels like a bad thing to us). I’m not merely referring to these prophecies in Isaiah, but also to several references Christ makes to His disciples and other New Testament writers use to the Church.

I have no answer today. But I have confidence when I’m in heaven that I’ll finally be able to say, “Now I understand.” It will all make sense one day.

ISAIAH - THE COMPASSION OF GOD

I have learned a few things about God’s compassion through a survey of Isaiah. Not surprisingly there are many positive synonyms or companion characteristics mentioned in many of the verses: things like kindness, comfort, love, favor, gracious, tenderness. But surprisingly, as we will see, anger is also mentioned.

Examples of some of these companion characteristics include, Isa 51:3a,

“The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins;...”

Isa 63:7, “I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. “

Isa 30:18, “Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion...”

God’s compassion has action involved. It isn’t a passive emotion. For example, Isa 49:10b, Is 49:13, 14,

“...He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water....13 Shout for joy, O heavens; rejoice, O earth; burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones. ...

God in no way is embarrassed for maintaining this characteristic. In fact, He acts surprised when accused of NOT being compassionate. After being accused of lacking compassion (see also Is 63:15) God answers, defending Himself, using a comparison God assumes is self evident by saying,

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?” (Isa 49:15)

And in an extended passage, God acknowledges that at times His compassion is absent or at least seems absent (see also Is 27:11)...but it is only for a moment. His love overcomes His anger.

Isa 54:7-10, “For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. 8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you, ”says the Lord your Redeemer. 9 “To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. 10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be

shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, "says the Lord, who has compassion on you."

A similar thought is mentioned in a much shorter version in Isa 60:10,

"Though in anger I struck you, in favor I will show you compassion."

Compassion wrapped in kindness, comfort, love, favor, graciousness, and tenderness...that is the kind of God who sets aside His anger in order to have a relationship with us.

"...yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, "says the Lord, who has compassion on you" (Isa 54:10b).

ISAIAH 14 DEVOTIONAL

The key verses in Isaiah chapter 14 reveal much about the evil intent of the heart.

Isa 14:12-15, "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. 14 I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." 15 But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit."

I, I, I. Me, me, me.

"There is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

Pride, self-centeredness. Me first. Me only.

We are all afflicted with this particular disease.

In this passage, we have certainly one of the most extreme expression of pride. Whether it is specific to an enemy of Israel or a description of the ultimate enemy, Satan, either way we have pride on display.

- Satan vowed to ascend to heaven, but has instead fallen from heaven.
- Satan vowed to be raised on a throne above the stars, but has been cast down to earth.
- Satan vowed to make himself like the Most High, but has been brought down to the grave.

But it is so similar to the pride that I find in my own heart.

- I want my needs met.
- I want people to agree with me.
- I think I'm the one who is right.
- I want people to listen to me.

As believers who have been delivered from our vain attempts at self righteousness,. Even after forgiveness, we are tempted in our flesh ("boasting pride of life" 1John 2:16) to continue down this path. And to whatever degree we allow ourselves to be "conformed to the image of this world" (Ro 12:2) we are squeezed into a mold of selfish pursuits. Nevertheless, even in our salvation, we are told EXACTLY what to do.

Phil 2:2-5, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

Col 3:12, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

1Peter 5:5-6, "...All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." 6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

ISAIAH - CREATOR

If you were going to the Scriptures to build a Biblical defense for the fact that God was indeed Creator, where would you turn? Certainly anyone who knows their Bible student head straight to the first few chapters of Genesis (Ge 1:1ff). Others would remember parts of many Psalms (Ps 33:6, Ps 33:9, Ps 148:5, et al) which poetically celebrate God as Creator. And, some would go to Colossians and Hebrews and refer to Christ being the present at creation and the sustainer of all things.

But Isaiah? Who would ever think to head to Isaiah? When I got started on this I was a bit overwhelmed. (This will be a bit longer than usual.)

Look at the both the quantity of references (over 35), but possible equally as important the varied way (at least fourteen) in which God is referred to as Creator through synonym and metaphors.

- Created – Isa 40:26; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7; 45:8, 12, 18; 54:16; 57:16
- Creator – Isa 27:11; 40:28; 43:15
- Maker – Isa 17:7; 27:11; 45:9, 11; 51:13; 54: 5
- Made the earth- Isa 45:12, 18
- Stretched out the heavens – Isa 44:24; 45:12; 51:13
- Potter – Isa 29:16; 45:9; 64:8
- Laid the foundations – Isa 48:13; 51:13, 16
- Formed it – Isa 29:16; 45:18
- Spread out the heavens – Isa 48:13
- Made it – Isa 22:11
- Founded it – Isa 45:18
- Fashioned- Isa 45:18
- Work of Your hand – Isa 64:8
- Set the heavens in place Isa 51:16

Here are some observations.

There are clear statements linking the God of Israel to being the Creator.

“In that day men will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel.” Isa 17:7

I have previously mused about the special place God has for the city of Jerusalem. Here again we see His claim of being its Creator and here closely tied with His sovereignty.

“...But you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago” Isa 22:11b.

Many who are pots don't even recognize that there is a Potter. They make outlandish statements about even the existence of God. They determine to be self determined.

“You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, “He did not make me”? Can the pot say of the potter, “He knows nothing”?” Isa 29:16.

No one compares to or equals the Creator. None of the gods or idols created anything. Look to the One who created the stars of the sky or to the “ends of the earth”. One may claim God doesn't care. How could this person say that in front of the very One who created them?

“Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing ... 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth” Isa 40:26,28

This next comment takes some context to fully understand, but God acts in order to show the world He is a provider. I should be praying that God would provide out of His nature of being a Creator.

“...So that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.” Isa 41:20

“...He who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to

its people, and life to those who walk on it:..." Is 42:5.

Isaiah couldn't wait to describe His God and he went directly to His role as Creator.

"I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King." Isa 43:15.

Having quoted 42:5, He adds "who formed you in the womb" (Isa 44:24).

Isa 45:7-12 is a LONG section on the topic at hand. It is as if God is saying,

**"Make no mistake...
I am your Creator!"**

Isa 45:7 I form the light; create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

Isa 45:8 "I have created it" (Not quite sure what the "it" is in this passage....hmmmm)

Isa 45:9 This is so obvious. "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'?"

Isa 45:10 This statement is as if we the created ones are saying, "I would have done much better. God didn't do a very good job when He created _____."

Isa 45:11 "Do you question Me about My children (Unfortunately, yes, I do. All the time.) "or give Me orders about the work of My hands?" (Oh, my gosh. I have expectations of God all the time.)

Isa 45:12 "It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts."

And in what is one of the most clear statements in all of Scripture regarding His role as Creator (expressed in six ways),

"...He who created the heavens, He is God; He Who fashioned and made the earth, He founded it. He did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited "I am the LORD, and there is none else" Isa 45:18.

There are many other planets that are uninhabited. Earth is special.

If He can put the heavens in place and create the foundations of the earth certainly He can do all else that He declares.

"I have put my words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of my hand — I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who say to Zion, 'You are my people'" Isa 51:16

"For your Maker is your husband – the LORD Almighty..." Isa 54:8

Isaiah doesn't miss some of the irony of having a heavenly Father who is Creator.

"Yet, O LORD, You are our Father. We are the clay, You are the potter; we are all the work of Your hand" Isa 64:8.

This is true even though we are sinful and forget to trust in Him (Isa 54:6, 7). **Amen!**

Could you ever have imagined Isaiah could be such source for a description of God the Father as Creator? Unbelievable.

ISAIAH CALLING

There is a whole lot of "calling" going on in the book of Isaiah. I don't mean to be so pedantic about it (or maybe I should say 'after being so pedantic I want to draw some meaning from what I observe), but there are over 65 uses of "call, calls, called, or calling" in the book.

Several of the uses are merely the naming of something rather insignificant (Isa 19:18; 30:7; 47:1, 5; 58:12). A good many are the use in a strictly human sense (if that is possible in Scripture) (Isa 5:20; 8:2; 8:12; 21:11; 31:4; 32:5; 34:12; 36:13; 41:25; 44:5; 48:2; 58:5,13; 59:4).

There is one famous use of angels calling to one another

'Holy, Holy, Holy..', Isa 6:3.

There are quite a few references to naming (entitling) something of more obvious significance

- Zion called City of Righteousness, the Faithful city, Isa 1:28, 29
- Remnant called holy, Isa 4:3
- 'And will call Him Immanuel', Isa 7:14
- And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Isa 9:6
- A Highway is called Way of Holiness, Isa 35:8
- God is called God of all the earth, Isa 54:5
- Jerusalem is called City of the Lord; Isa 60:14
- Walls are called salvation; Isa 60:18
- Israel is called a Holy people, Redeemed, Sought After, City no Longer Deserted; Isa 62:12

Not to be missed is exhortation for people to call on God in prayer.

Isa 12:4, "In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted."

Isa 55:6, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near."

There is also failing to call on God in prayer.

"Yet you have not called upon me, O Jacob, you have not wearied yourselves for me, O Israel." Isa 43:22

God was found faithful even when His people did not call on Him. "I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I.'" Isa 65:1

And we have God's wonderful offer to answer prayer. Note the timing of His answer!

"Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I." Isa 58:9

"Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear." Isa 65:24

The largest (and possibly most significant) portion, though, is a use of something being called by God.

- Isa 40:3 a voice of One calling: "In the desert prepare the way..."
- Isa 40:26 God calls each star by name
- Isa 41:2 Calls him in righteousness to His service
- Isa 41:4 calling generations from the beginning
- Isa 41:9 called you from the farthest corner "you are My servant"
- Isa 43:7 everyone who is called by My name
- Isa 49:1 Messiah knew he was called
- Isa 51:2 called Abraham
- Isa 54:6 will call you back
- Isa 61:6 priests were called

His greatest act of calling was of His own Son. Isa 42:6-7,

I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, 7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

So, calling is within the very heart of God. It is in His character and He acts out of it.

RELATED RESOURCES: Greek Word Studies on...

- Calling ([2821](#)) klesis
- Called ([2822](#)) kletos
- Called ([1941](#)) epikaleomai

The called are those who have been summoned by God... **called**...

- according to His purpose (**Kletos** - Ro 8:28-note)
- to salvation (**Kaleo** - Ro 8:30-note)
- saints by calling (**Kletos** - 1Co 1:2)
- both Jews and Greeks (**Kletos** - 1Co 1:24)
- having been called (**kaleo**) "with a holy" calling (**klesis**) (2Ti 1:9-note)
- heavenly calling (**klesis**) (Heb 3:1-note)
- out of darkness into His marvelous light (**Kaleo** - 1Pe 2:9-note)
- to walk worthy (**Kaleo** - Ep 4:1- note)
- by grace (**Kaleo** - Gal 1:6)
- not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles (**Kaleo** - Ro 9:24-note)
- through the "gospel" that we "may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (**Kaleo** - 2Th 2:14)
- and be brought "into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (**Kaleo** - 1Co 1:9)
- and return in triumph "with Him" at the end of this age (**Kletos** - Re 17:14-note).

God's great doctrine of our calling should cause all the "called of Jesus Christ" to exclaim "Glory!"

While God's choice of the elect is firm and certain in God (2Ti 2:9-see note), it may not always be obvious to the individual Christian.

ISAIAH 15-16

Isaiah 15-16 are a judgment against **Moab**. It foretells a time when Moab will be ruined, destroyed. (By the way, you won't find **Moab** on a modern day map anywhere. It used to be just east of the Dead Sea but it was sacked in 701 B.C.)

In the midst of this predicted doom, there is hope!

"In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it – one from the house of David- one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness." Isaiah 16:5

Just marvel at the simple statements found in this one verse.

- God is motivated to provide for us out of His love.
- No matter what, God is on the throne.
- His promises never fail.
- A man will sit and judge. Jesus - fully God and fully man.
- God is always faithful to His covenant with Abraham and David.
- In the end all things will be judged and judged fairly.
- God is intent on promoting righteousness (The Amplified Version reads, "...being swift to do righteousness.")

We know that this indeed was a statement about the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus. I don't know that I would have focused much on the fact that He was One who would seek and speed. I get the justice and righteousness, but His role is seeking and speeding.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Matthew 5:6-note

ISAIAH 17

... declares the Lord, the God of Israel. 7 In that day men will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel. 8 They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands, and they will have no regard for the Asherah poles and the incense altars their fingers have made. 9 In that day their strong cities, which they left because of the Israelites, will be like places abandoned to thickets and undergrowth. And all will be desolation. 10 You have forgotten God your Savior; you have not remembered the Rock, your fortress... (Isa 17:6-10a).

men will look, Isa 17:7

men will not look, Isa 17:8

they will no longer regard, Isa 17:8

men have forgotten, Isa 17:10

(men) have not remembered, Isa 17:10

It appears that faithfulness is being measured by the focus of one's attention. The ONLY worthy of that focus day in and day out is the One who is:

The God of Israel, Isa 17:6

(our) Maker, Isa 17:7

The Holy One of Israel, Isa 17:7

God your Savior, Isa 17:10

The Rock, Isa 17:10

Your fortress, Isa 17:10

What draws your focus on your Lord? What draws your focus away? Do you need a partner to help you keep your focus?

There is no substitute for consistent, regular, direct, one on one exposure to the Word of God. That can come in the form of reading, studying, **memorizing**, **meditating**, or hearing....or a combination of all of them over time. I'm not hung up on what a "quiet time" should actually look like. But whatever it looks like for you, is your focus being drawn to God through His Word on a regular basis? All of us will tend to "not look, no longer regard, or not remember" without this discipline.

If it has been a while I encourage you to start again...today.

RELATED RESOURCE: Seven Minutes with God: How to jumpstart your quiet time

ISAIAH - LISTEN

Isaiah 66:2 "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word". (This should be placed in contrast to those who me are rely being religious and just going through the motions.) "Is 66:4 ...so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one **listened** . They did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me." (The cure?) "5 Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word:..." (In other words, **LISTEN!**)

Many references equate to "Hey, wake up. Pay attention." For example:

"Hear, O heavens! **Listen** , O earth!..." (Is 1:2-note).

See also, Isa 8:9; 10:30; 13:4 (twice); Isa 32:9; 34:1; 42:23; 44:1; 47:8; 49:1; 52:8.

Others references are exhortations to **listen** to the Word of God! For example,

"Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom;**listen** to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!" (Is 1:10-note).

See also, Is 28:23; 51:4; 55:2 (twice).

Closely related are the references where God wants Israel His people to **listen** exclusively to Him. Chapter 48 is a classic example where He exhorts them four times: Isa 48:1,

"**Listen** to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and come from the line of Judah, you who take oaths in the name of the Lord and invoke the God of Israel — but not in truth or righteousness — 2 you who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and rely on the God of Israel — the Lord Almighty is his name: ...12 "**Listen** to me, O Jacob ,Israel, whom I have called:...14 "Come together, all of you, and**listen**... 16 "Come near me and **listen** to this:..."

Similarly,

"**Listen** to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; ..4 "**Listen** to me, my people; hear me, my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations" (Isa 51:1,4).

It is fascinating that God does not ALWAYS **listen** to mankind.

"When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not **listen**. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean" (Isa 1:15,16-note).

Not **listening** is equated with being stubborn as seen in,

"Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, 12 to whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose" — but they **would not listen**. 13 So then, the word of the Lord to them will become: Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there — so that they will go and fall backward, be injured and snared and captured" (Isa 28:11, 12, 13).

See also Isa 30:9; 46:12 "...you stubborn-hearted..."; and Isa 55:12

For me, one of the most endearing references is found in Isa 46:3, 4,

"**Listen** to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. 4 Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."

And although the following words are characteristics of the Messiah who was to come, they are also the desire of my heart as I become more like my Savior.

"The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to **listen** like one being taught. 5 The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back" (Isa 50:4, 5).

I hope this reflects the beat of your heart, as well!

RELATED RESOURCES:

All 27 uses of "listen" in Isaiah - Isa 1:2, 15; 6:9; 7:13; 28:12, 23; 30:9; 32:3; 34:1; 36:16; 37:17; 41:1; 42:23; 44:1; 46:3, 12; 48:12, 14, 16; 49:1; 50:4; 51:1, 7; 52:8; 55:2, 3; 66:4

ISAIAH 19

In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord Almighty. One of them will be called the City of Destruction. In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the Lord at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. So the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and keep them. The Lord will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the Lord, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them." (Is 19:18, 19, 20, 21, 22)

This is an astonishing set of statements. Egypt responding to the Lord Almighty? This is unprecedented.

Egypt in Scripture virtually universally serves as either a very specific example or an almost complete typology of those who are stubborn and will not respond to God. Egypt is almost exclusively used as an example of "an enemy of God". They are never a friend to Israel. Prophecy is almost completely united in its judgment upon Egypt's leadership and its people.

So, to see a prophecy that one day Egypt will actually (Is 19:18, 19, 20)...

swear allegiance to the Lord Almighty

It will have a monument to the Lord at its border

It will be a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty

They will cry out to the Lord

Now it isn't surprising that (Is 19:20) ...

He will send them a savior and defender,
and He will rescue them.

So the Lord will make Himself known to the Egyptians...

because that is exactly the kind of God He is.

He will respond to their pleas and heal them.

Yes, that is the very nature of God Himself.

But, again (Is 19:21), it is astonishing that...

They will acknowledge the Lord.

They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings;
they will make vows to the Lord and keep them.

They will turn to the Lord

But, why indeed am I so surprised. I was lost in sin. I was stubborn and wanted my own way. I myself was an enemy of God. I was headed for judgment, left to my own devices. If God changed me why wouldn't God do this for Egypt?

I believe it is important to see that Isaiah says this will happen to five cities which some believe means that actually a small part of Egypt will respond, as if saying, 'out of all the cities in Egypt this response will occur from only five cities'.

Of course, we know that this turn on whoever's part (large or small) is actually caused by the God who opens eyes, opens ears, gives understanding, convicts, makes Himself known, and ultimately exchanges a heart of rebellion with a heart that can respond.

You've heard stories, read stories, and may have told a few yourself, about old so-and-so who would have been the last person on earth you thought would become a Christian....only years later to learn that indeed He has been transformed by the power of God.

It is with this same astonishment that we read that Egypt (or at least a part of it), of all people Egyptians, will one day also bend their knee to the only Savior, Defender, Rescuer...because God will make Himself known to them....just like He has to you and me!

No one.....NO ONE....exists outside of God's sovereign work in their life. Now THAT is good news.

Side Bar: When I read Isa 19:25 ("The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt My people, Assyria My handiwork, and Israel My inheritance.") I thought to myself, 'That would make a great book title about prophecy: My People, My handiwork, and My Inheritance'. Anyone up for the challenge?

ISAIAH - BLESSING

The concept of **blessing** is important to us even if we don't have a precise definition for it. **Blessing** is a HUGE theological concept with much of its foundation established in God's promises to Abraham. Christ poetically describes the disciple as one who is **blessed** in the beatitudes. Paul says we have been **blessed** in the heavenly realms with every spiritual **blessing** in Christ. These are BIG concepts.

In the first mention of **blessing** in the book of Isaiah, we actually have all three forms that show up in the book all in the same verse (**blessing, bless, blessed**).

Isa 19:24-25, "In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a **blessing** on the earth. 25 The Lord Almighty will **bless** them, saying, " **Blessed** be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance." It is reassuring to see God continuing to use Israel to be a **blessing** on the earth (His plan all along).

God has NOT forgotten His Abrahamic covenant which included His promise to **bless** Israel as well as to make them a **blessing** to others.

Isa 51:2, "...look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I **blessed** him and made him many."

This **blessing** is God initiated. I'm a bit surprised the number of times in Isaiah, that **blessing** is somehow tied to the idea of "pouring out", the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the recipients include descendants.

Isa 44:3, "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my **blessing** on your descendants."

Other references to the Holy Spirit and pouring out are Isa 32:15,20. And other references to descendants are found in Isa 61:9; 65:23.

God's **blessing** is also rooted in His characteristics of compassion and justice (also Isa 56:1; 61:8).

Isa 30:18 "Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. **Blessed** are all who wait for him!"

It appears that one of the conditions of being **blessed** is a willingness to be patient! You may not be like to me, but I don't often equate **blessing** and patience. I want it now!

Clearly a large part of being a recipient of **blessing** (from an Old Testament perspective) comes through obedience.

Isa 56:1-2, "This is what the Lord says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. 2 **Blessed** is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."

God's **blessing** isn't focused on the past but is forward looking. Much of the **blessing** God will pour out is yet to come.

Isa 65:23, "They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people **blessed** by the Lord, they and their descendants with them."

The truest things that can be said about **blessing** in the book of Isaiah is that clearly **blessing** comes from the Lord Almighty. It is initiated by Him for His purposes.

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All 11 uses of bless, blessing, etc in Isaiah - Isa 19:24, 25; 30:18; 32:20; 44:3; 51:2; 56:2; 61:9; 65:16, 23; 66:3;

ISAIAH 22

"...you saw that the City of David had many breaches in its defenses; you stored up water in the Lower Pool. 10 You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. 11 You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago." (Isa 22:9-11)

I just had a plumbing problem in our house, so we called a plumber. Our outside freezer is failing; we'll have to get a new/used one to replace it. Jana's car has a "maintenance light" on; time to go to Jiffy Lube. Two outside security lights have finally 'bit the dust' after ten years. A friend came and installed two new ones we ordered. Our front porch deck needs to be stained before it weathers too badly in this Arizona sun. So, I've hired a trusted teenager to break his back (rather me break mine).

When we have problems, we jump to fix them ourselves or look to someone else to fix them for us. We don't typically stop to think much of it. We just do it.

That kind of thinking can get us in trouble.

The people of Jerusalem had a "breach in its defenses". So, they "strengthened the wall" and "built a reservoir". Both were probably needed and long overdue.

So, what is the problem? "...You did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago."

I'm not quite sure if this is two things or a repetition of the same thought. Maybe it is actually causes-and-effect. They didn't look to God because actually down deep they did not have regard for Him. He had established Jerusalem. He had it in His plan in ages past.

Their problem is they had forgotten or grown careless. They did not view their situation as having been established by God and something within His control. Their knee jerk reaction to their problems was fix them. Their default position was to look to self for the solution.

Oops. That is always a bad choice. We are all infected with that disease because we come into this world with that perspective and we typically practice it a whole lot prior to being transformed by Christ.

As a believer we ought not to stay in that condition. Following Christ means dying to self.

I'm not saying that God won't call us to be involved with fixing our problems. But if He does, it will be while we are in dependence upon Him.

Wouldn't it have been great for Isaiah to say, "They restored Jerusalem to its intended strength and glory as they looked to Him who had made it, out of deep regard (appreciation/thanks/gratitude) for the One who planned it long ago."

I encourage you today to look at your current circumstance, even if things are falling apart, and begin to work your way out of it by starting in total dependence upon God who is the Sovereign One and who planned your current circumstances long ago.

ISAIAH 24-27

Isaiah 24-27 are four chapters that are sometimes referred to as **Isaiah's Little Apocalypse**. They are very similar to the book of The Revelation.

In a recent Reflection I commented, "Sometimes destruction is a righteous act."

"Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous" (Isa 10:22, 23).

Now in chapter 24 we see more of this in action (or predicted to happen).

"See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; He will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants –"(Is 24:1).

This will be a devastation that appears to be across the whole earth. Some feel it will be primarily in the land of Israel. Evidence pointing to the whole earth includes "its face" in Is 24:1 and "the earth will be completely laid waste" in Is 24:3. Evidence supporting a more localized devastation in Israel includes "everlasting covenant" in Is 24:4, "the city" in Is 24:12, and references to Mt. Zion and Jerusalem in Is 24:23. (In my opinion, the pictures of what will happen to Israel are representative of what will be happening all across the earth.)

Most of us would be quick to ask, "What caused God to get so mad?" "Why is God doing this?" "We (or they) don't deserve this kind of treatment, do we?"

Well, actually, this destruction is self induced. It is a result of man's depravity. "The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant" (Is 27:5). And in Is 27:6, "Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt..."

The resulting good news found in this chapter is

"...for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously." (Is 24:23)

(See also Psalm 82:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, [8notes](#) and Rev 21:22-[note](#), Rev 21:23-[note](#), Rev 21:24-[note](#), Rev 21:25-[note](#), Rev 21:26-[note](#), Rev 21:27-[note](#).) (How would you like to attend that elders' meeting?)

Lesson learned? In the midst of inevitable calamity on this earth, OUR GOD REIGNS!

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RELATED RESOURCES:

All 15 uses of destruction (or related words) in Isaiah - Isa 10:22, 23, 25; 13:6; 14:23; 16:4; 19:18; 22:4;

28:2, 22; 34:5; 47:11; 51:19; 59:7; 60:18

Sing it out to Him...

[Our God Reigns - full choir](#)

[Our God Reigns - solo by Lenny Smith](#)

Study His Sovereign Rule Over All...

Sovereignty - God's Attribute (note verb "reign")

El Elyon: Most High God - Sovereign Over All

ISAIAH - SALVATION

I, all of a sudden, have gotten a little scared. Probably a good thing. I'm going to try to summarize what Isaiah has to say about **salvation**. I understand a bit more about the Scripture's admonition to be careful about being a teacher of God's Word. It is a high responsibility and a humbling experience, particularly with regard to this subject.

According to Isaiah, God is the One who has to be satisfied regarding our **salvation**. We are talking about a personal affront, a personal relationship, and (praise God) a personal solution!

Isa 12:1, "In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O Lord. Although You were angry with me, Your anger has turned away and You have comforted me. 2 Surely God is my **salvation**; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my **salvation**." 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of **salvation**."

Man has a problem.

Isa 64:5-7, "You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? 6 All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. 7 No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins."

Isa 59:1-3, "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. 3 For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt. Your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue mutters wicked things."

Salvation is accomplished by God's own initiative as He sees the plight of man and his inability to save himself. This includes the discipline of those who deserve His wrath.

Isa 59:16-18, "He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked **salvation** for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. 17 He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of **salvation** on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak. 18 According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes; he will repay the islands their due." (See also Isa 63:5)

Isaiah is abundantly clear when identify God as the sole (soul, too) source of **salvation**.

Isa 33:22 "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us."

Isa 43:11, 12 "I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior I have revealed and saved and proclaimed...."

Isa 45:21 "...Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me." (See also Isa 17:10, 33:2, 5, 6; 38:20; 43:3; 45:15; 60:16)

Even when told how to obtain **salvation**, Israel still chose to reject God's offer.

Isa 30:15 "This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your **salvation**, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it."

Our part is to turn/fear -

Isa 45:22 "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

Isa 46:13 "I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my **salvation** will not be delayed. I will grant **salvation** to Zion, my splendor to Israel." Isa 33:2, 5, 6, "O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our **salvation** in time of distress...5 The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. 6 He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of **salvation** and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure."

There is a certainty to God's **salvation**. Isa 51:5, 6b, 8b, "My righteousness draws near speedily, my **salvation** is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.... 6c But my **salvation** will last forever, my righteousness will never fail....8bBut my righteousness will last forever, my **salvation** through all generations."

Interestingly, Isaiah actually provides a definition and reveals some of the results of our **salvation**.

Isa 25:8-9, "...he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his **salvation**."

Isaiah uses a great deal of ink regarding Israel's **salvation**.

Isa 45:17, "But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting **salvation**; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting." (See also Isa 49:8; 63:8)

This has always been true in the relationship with the LORD and Israel. Not surprisingly, righteousness and **salvation** are inextricably joined, as well.

Isa 59:16b-17a, "...so his own arm worked **salvation** for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. 17 He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of **salvation** on his head;..." Isa 61:10, "For he has clothed me with garments of **salvation** and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness ..." Isa 63:9, "In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old." (See also Isa 45:8; 46:13; 56:1; 59:17; 62:1; 63:2).

It is God's intent for Israel to be a light to the nations regarding **salvation**. Isa 49:6, "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my **salvation** to the ends of the earth."

Isa 49:26b, "...Then all mankind will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." (See also Isa 52:10; 62:11.)

One of the common mistakes in reading the Old Testament is assuming that the use of '**salvation**' is always the same. But Isaiah himself clearly also uses it in the sense of military deliverer or safe refuge: Isa 19:20; 26:1, 35:4; 37:35; 49:25; 60:18.

There are other aspects of **salvation** within the book of Isaiah. Idols cannot save (Isa 44:17, 20; 45:20; 46:7; 57:13). Human wisdom fails miserably at its attempts to **save** (Isa 47:13, 14, 15). The messengers of **salvation** receive a special blessing.

Isa 52:7, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim **salvation**, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" [Click Song](#))

Not surprisingly, righteousness and **salvation** are inextricably joined, as well.

Isa 59:16-17a, "...so his own arm worked **salvation** for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. 17 He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of **salvation** on his head;..."

Isa 61:10, "For he has clothed me with garments of **salvation** and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness ..." (See also Isa 45:8; 46:13; 56:1; 59:17; 62:1; 63:2).

And, of course, there are other descriptions of our **salvation** within the book that don't use the word itself. The classic passage is found in Is. 53:6, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

A final look at our **Savior**...

"Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? 'It is I, speaking in righteousness, **mighty to save**'" (Isa 63:1b).

Play song **Mighty to Save...**

[Mighty To Save \(Hillsong version\)](#)

[Mighty to Save \(Laura Story\)](#)

ISAIAH - RIGHTEOUSNESS

I've chosen to tackle yet another huge subject in Scripture, **righteousness**. Isaiah also has a great deal to say on the topic. There is no way for me to tackle this subject in totality, but I can begin to grasp what Isaiah says.

God's basic accusation against Israel (Jerusalem) is that **righteousness** used to dwell within her, but no longer does (Is 1:21; 5:7). Its absence causes great distress (Is 5:7). Isaiah also recognizes a **righteousness** of our own that comes to nothing (Is 48:1; 57:12).

But God Himself promises to restore Jerusalem to its former glory.

Isa 1:26, 27, "I will restore your judges as in days of old, your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you will be called the City of **Righteousness**, the Faithful City. Zion will be redeemed with justice, her penitent ones with **righteousness**."

It is interesting here that God equates, or compares, **righteousness** to faithfulness.

Righteousness is contrasted with wickedness. And, **righteousness** is at some level measured by works.

"Tell the **righteous** it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. 11 Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done." Isa 3:10, 11

God Himself is **righteousness**. It is one of His primary characteristics. He "uses it" to show Himself holy.

"But the Lord Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his **righteousness**." Isa 5:16.

He is known by the **remnant** to be the **righteous** One (Is 24:16). In fact, **righteousness** is found nowhere else.

"They will say of me, 'In the Lord alone are **righteousness** and strength.'" (Is 45:24).

Righteousness is so equated with God that

"It pleased the Lord for the sake of his **righteousness** to make his law great and glorious." (Isa 42:21).

God lets **righteousness** be the determiner in His decision making, even down to minor details like the raising up of a foreign king for His purpose (Is 45:13). In that sense, **righteousness** is God's measuring stick.

"I will make justice the measuring line and **righteousness** the plumb line;..." Isa 28:17.

He gives **righteousness** to whom He wishes.

Isa 45:25, "But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be found **righteous** and will exult." (See also Is 64:6).

The means of giving that **righteousness** to us is through salvation.

Isa 46:13, "I am bringing my **righteousness** near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel." (See also Isa 51:5; 56:1; 58:8).

Isa 61:3, "They will be called oaks of **righteousness**, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor." (See also Isa 60:21).

His presence brings with it justice and **righteousness**.

Isa 33:5, "The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and **righteousness**." (See also

Isa 32:15,17.)

In another reference to His presence, God promises to strengthen, help, and uphold us. How can He do this? He has **arighteous** right hand!

Isa 41:10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my **righteous** right hand."

Justice and **righteousness** are often found together (Isa 1:21, 27; 5:6; 9:7; 11:4; 16:5; 28:16; 32:1, 16; 33:5; 51:4; 53:11; 56:1; 59:9, 14.)

Not surprisingly, **righteousness** and salvation are inextricably joined, as well.

Isa 59:16, 17a, "...so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own **righteousness** sustained him. 17 He put on **righteousness** as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head;..."

Isa 61:10, "For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of **righteousness** ..." (See also Isa 45:8; 46:13; 56:1; 59:17; 62:1; 63:2).

The Messiah, having been called in **righteousness**, (Is 42: 6) will be known to rule with **righteousness**.

"...He will reign on David's throne, and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and **righteousness** from that time on and forever...(Is 9:7)." (See also Isa 11:4, 5; 16:5; 28:16, 17; 53:11.)

Judgments are intended to be a discipline that produces **righteousness**.

Isa 26:9, 10, "...When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn **righteousness**. 10 Though grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn **righteousness**; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and regard not the majesty of the Lord."

(I'm not sure how to distinguish who learns and who doesn't from these verses. But, Proverbs certainly has something to say about that subject!)

It appears that God's expectation for human leadership is one of **righteousness** and justice.

Isa 32:1, 2, "See, a king will reign in **righteousness** and rulers will rule with justice. 2 Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land."

The effect of this kind of leadership will be peace, quietness, and confidence.

Isa 32:17, "The fruit of **righteousness** will be peace; the effect of **righteousness** will be quietness and confidence forever."

For us, to pursue God is to pursue **righteousness**.

"Listen to me, you who pursue **righteousness** and who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were cut..." (Isa 51:1).

God paves the way for the **righteous** to receive benefits. They may enter the gates of Zion (Is 26:2), their path is made level (Is 26:7) and smooth (Is 26:7).

I end with three of the great declarations and pleas of the book of Isaiah.

"And there is no God apart from me, a **righteous** God and a Savior; there is none but me." Isa 45:21

"You heavens above, rain down **righteousness**; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let **righteousness** grow with it; I, the Lord, have created it." Isa 45:8

"...But my **righteousness** will last forever, my salvation through all generations." Isa 51:6b, 8b

All 65 uses (in 63 verses) of righteous or righteousness in Isaiah - Isa 1:21, 26, 27; 3:10; 5:7, 16; 9:7; 10:22; 11:4, 5; 16:5; 24:16; 26:2, 7, 9, 10; 28:17; 32:1, 16, 17; 33:5, 15; 41:2, 10; 42:6, 21; 45:8, 13, 19, 21, 23, 24; 46:12, 13; 48:1, 18; 51:1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 53:11; 54:14; 56:1 (2x); Is 57:1 (2x), Is 57:12; 58:2, 8; 59:4, 9, 14, 16, 17; 60:17, 21; 61:3, 10, 11; 62:1, 2; 63:1; 64:5, 6

ISAIAH - REDEEMER

While studying the subject of salvation in the book of Isaiah it wouldn't be surprising to also think of the references to **Redeemer** that is used 13 times in the book and the concept of being redeemed that is also used another dozen times. Surprisingly, though, neither is used very often in close proximity to the uses of salvation that we just studied (with the exceptions being Is 49:26; 60:16).

The title of **Redeemer** is most often tied too close to other titles for God, the most common being "the Holy One of Israel" (6 times - Isa 41:14, 43:14, 47:4, 48:17, 49:7, 54:5). It is also tied to other names (King-Is 44:6, Lord Almighty [in the NIV equating with LORD of hosts in NAS]- Is 44:6, 47:4, 54:6]; Mighty One of Jacob-Is 49:26, 60:16; Lord; Father-Is 63:16; King-Is 44:6). One could conclude from this that **Redeemer** is "just" a title – sort of a primer on "Who is God?". Obviously this implies He completes the act of redeeming, but it does so more through the use of a title than describing the act itself.

Here are a few examples:

Isa 47:4, "Our **Redeemer** — the Lord Almighty is his name — is the Holy One of Israel."

Isa 54:5, "For your Maker is your husband — the Lord Almighty is his name — the Holy One of Israel is your **Redeemer**; he is called the God of all the earth."

Isa 49:26b, "...Then all mankind will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, your **Redeemer**, the Mighty One of Jacob."

So, what about the uses of "**redeemed**" in Israel. Who or what is **redeemed**? It is clear by the uses that God directly **redeems** His people, Israel. He speaks directly of **redeeming** Israel or Jacob (Is 43:1; 44:23; 48:20). He speaks of **redeeming** the city of God, Zion or Jerusalem, referring to His people who reside there as representative of the whole nation (Is 1:27; 52:9). He harkens back to having **redeemed** Abraham and His descendants (Is 29:22; 63:9) as well as looking forward or promising this **redemption** to come (Is 1:27; 52:3; 62:12).

And in the most direct language available, God specifically, directly, and personally declares "I have **redeemed** you" (Is 44:22; 43:1; 48:20).

After all this analysis (as minimal as it may be), it nevertheless is amazing and wonderful to read such personal words from God Almighty to us directly. So much more than an academic pursuit, these words are warm and soothing to our souls.

Isa 43:1, "But now, this is what the Lord says — he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have **redeemed** you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

All 26 uses of redeem, redemption or Redeemer in Isaiah - Isa 1:27; 29:22; 35:9; 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:6, 22, 23, 24, 47:4; 48:17, 20; 49:7, 26; 51:10; 52:3, 9; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 62:12; 63:4, 63:9, 16.

- Kinsman Redeemer (Redemption) - OT/NT
- Goel = Kinsman Redeemer (In Ruth)

Note: No entries for chapters 18, 20, 21, and 23

ISAIAH 25

I have two separate thoughts from chapter 25.

First, the subjects of God, worship, and sovereignty -

Isa 25:1a, "O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name..."

This is a very simple, yet very biblical definition/description of worship. When we understand the God of the universe is personal, we can't help but worship Him.

Isa 25:1b, "...for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago."

God cannot be accurately accused of any unfaithfulness. Not one time in history has He failed His people...not one time; not me, not you. He has NEVER turned His back on any of us. He is perfect faithfulness.

All He does is marvelous (including the things that don't appear so to us) and these things are all a part of His sovereign control.

I'm amazed.

Second, the subjects of death and heaven –

Isa 25:8, "...He will swallow up death forever..."

This has its wonderful corollary in 1 Corinthians 15:54, 55, "...Then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

And with no sting, there are no longer any reasons for tears.

Isa 25:8b, "...The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken."

This has its corollary in Revelation 21:4 ([note](#)),

"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

I can't wait for that day when all sources of pain will be removed and all lingering doubts of disgrace will be totally covered by His grace (of course this is true now, but it will be experienced in heaven in a way that we don't/can't experience in its totality on this earth.)

I'm thankful.

ISAIAH 26

Isaiah 26:12 -The chapter's key verse also serves as the motivation for the next reflection on "peace". I'll reserve comment on the first part of the verse for next time.

Isa 26:12, "Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us."

For now let's focus on the second part of this verse..."...all that we have accomplished You have done for us."

Now wait a second. This seems to be saying that all I've done...well, I really haven't done. This says God has done it for me. How can that be? Does this mean I'm just a robot?

Isaiah is, in just a few word, acknowledging the sovereignty of God. Actually, this is a verse I missed previously (didn't include) when I did my reflection on the sovereignty of God. (It is amazing once you start looking for the subject how it pops up everywhere, even in places you previously looked!)

Isaiah isn't denying our part. He isn't circumventing human responsibility. He isn't promoting fatalism.

Isaiah is acknowledging that in the end, even with all of our attempts to do things on our own, God directs our steps. Proverbs declares this,

"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps" (Pr 16:9).

And there of course is the New Testament corollary spoken by Jesus,

"...Apart from Me you can do nothing" John 15:5.

Some might react to this as unfair or manipulative of God. I find it very comforting. I can pray. I can work hard. But my confidence is that if any of spiritual value is going to occur it will ultimately be a work of the Spirit and not of self effort.

ISAIAH PEACE

(For some reason, I'm finding it difficult coalescing the passages regarding peace in the book of Isaiah. This will probably be a bit more of a listing of the passages with intervening commentary rather than an executive summary.)

All 13 uses of **peace** in Isaiah - Isa 9:6; 17:2; 27:5; 32:17, 18; 33:7, 20; 39:8; 45:7; 52:7; 55:12; 57:2; 59:8;

The first place within the book of Isaiah where peace is mentioned turns out to be a GREAT place to start. In fact you could call it the beginning and the end to the subject of peace (and in all the Scriptures).

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace . 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" Isa 9:6-7.

Note that peace and a Person are integrally linked. You can't have the first without the second. End of story.

Isa 26:3, "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you."

This is an often quoted verse. If I have a steadfast mind and trust in God I will be kept in perfect peace. Here He doesn't define perfect peace, but it is probably self-evident...you know it when you see/feel it.

Isa 26:12, "Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us."

In one of the clearest statements in Isaiah, God establishes peace. Peace has no other source. God establishes peace on our behalf.

Isa 32:17, "The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever."

Peace is the result of something else. It is the result of righteousness being expressed. It is here equated/paralleled with quietness and confidence.

Isa 48:17-18, "This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. 18 If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea."

Again, peace is the result of obedience and is tied to righteousness. Here it is expressed as flowing. Not quite sure the depth of that illustration.

Isa 48:22, "There is no peace," says the Lord, "for the wicked." (See also Isa 57:21.)

This should be self explanatory, self evident. But, the wicked miss this. They pursue ungodly means of securing peace. God clearly declares that peace isn't available to those who are evil (Isa 59:8).

Isa 52:7, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

In another very familiar verse we see peace being tied to the good news, the gospel, to salvation. Interestingly, again, we see God's sovereignty, here expressed almost as if it is the content of the good news.

Isa 53:5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

In the middle of a long passage describing the Suffering Servant, we find not only the harsh reality of what He was to go through, but one of the outcomes...peace. "...(T)he punishment that brought us peace...." (That would be a great book title.) The depth of that statement, though, is almost too much to comprehend. It demonstrates the deep love of our Savior for us. He reveals the purposefulness of His suffering. The cross is the greatest demonstration of Romans 8:28, of God working all things together for good for those who love Him.

Isa 54:10, "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you."

The content of God's covenant with His people is one of peace. (We know from the New Testament writings that this results in both peace-with-God and the peace-of-God.) Here, God is providing surety that this covenant will not be broken, by physical

circumstances or otherwise. This is guaranteed by His character, both His unending love and His compassion. He has staked his reputation on it.

Isa 55:12, "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

I have been surprised to see the number of passages that are so familiar to our ears from Isaiah that speak one way or another of peace (many of which have been put to song).

Isa 57:1-2, "The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. 2 Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death."

If you have ever wondered (and who hasn't) what life after this life will be like, God declares, for the righteous, we enter peace. Here, not surprisingly, it is equated with rest.

Isa 60:17c, "...I will make peace your governor and righteousness your ruler." (See also 66:12.)

Israel is promised a future when peace and righteousness will govern and rule.

"For to us a child is born.... And he will be called Wonderful Counselor... Prince of Peace . Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end." (Isa 9:6,7)

ISAIAH 28

Isaiah 28-39 is a rather long section with the setting being the onset of an Assyrian invasion. Isaiah 28-33 specifically deal out six woes upon Judah and Israel. This serves as an interesting challenge for interpretation and application.

Isa 28:5, 6 In that day the Lord Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people. He will be a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate."

He HIMSELF is our crown! These passages aren't guaranteeing us a crown. Our crown will be HIM! Yes, He is beautiful...He will be beautiful. He will be the appropriate reward or recognition for His people. And, yes, He will be enough. I long for that day.

It is hard to tell who will experience the spirit of justice and the strength He will provide. He already is these things and He already provides these things. So, I tend to think that these, too, will be "rewards" for His people who have served Him faithfully. To the one who was in a position to dispense judgment and did it well, he will experience directly from God a spirit of justice within him that goes beyond anything he could have imagined. For those who fought the battle at the gate (and who doesn't have a sense of this on an almost daily basis), he will be strengthened in his inner man; strength that will replace and go beyond all that was expensed on God's behalf. In other words, at the end of the ages, we will experience the Lord Almighty. Not riches, not fame, not control, not position. We will have Him. Come quickly, Lord Jesus! (1Co 16:22)

Isa 28:16, "So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed."

I have written before on the passages that relate to the Messiah. This verse from Isaiah may be the most frequently quoted verse (from Isaiah) in Scripture. It is repeated in Ro 9:3-note; Ro 10:11-note; and 1Pe 2:6-note.

Ours is to trust!

ISAIAH - GLORY

Some words are very hard to define. How is the world would one go about defining or describing God's glory. Is it the same as His holiness? Is it an outward thing only? It would probably take 66 books, written by over 40 different authors, over 1,500 years to start to come close to describing this. Oh, yeah. We have such a Book!

Isaiah makes a contribution to this idea with 45 references to glory or glorious. From them we get a glimpse of God's glory.

There are certain things God says are, or will, be glorious:

God's presence is glorious (Isa 3:8)

The Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious (Isa 4:2)

The Root of Jesse's place of rest will be glorious (Isa 11:10)

His arm of power is glorious (Isa 63:12)

Note that God's glory is often paired with other characteristics (as if we needed some help defining glory...which we do)

His law is great and glorious (Isa 42:21)

His temple is holy and glorious (Isa 60:7; Isa 64:11)

His throne is lofty, holy and glorious (Isa 63:15)

Glory and splendor seem to be synonymous (Isa 35:2)

There are descriptions of what His glory looks like or what impact it has:

In one of the more graphic depictions of God's glory we find a cloud of smoke and flaming fire. (Now, where have I heard that before?)

Isa 4:5, "Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy."

In Isa 58:8 His glory is said to be our rear guard.

In one of the more familiar passages we find that God's glory can be found everywhere. I take it this is also a description that the whole earth can't contain all of God's glory.

Isa 6:3, "And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

This is one of the places where we see God's holiness and His glory closely tied.

What should our response be?

He has done glorious things and it is worth shouting and singing about to the nations.

Isa 12:5-6, "Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. 6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

In at least one place in Isaiah we are told to give God glory. I'm not sure how human agents can do that other than be a mirror, reflecting His glory back to him. We certainly can't generate it or add to His glory.

Isa 24:15-16, "Therefore in the east give glory to the Lord; exalt the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea. 16 From the ends of the earth we hear singing: "Glory to the Righteous One."

It is also possible to glory in God (Isa 41:16; Isa 42:8).

His glory is something to be shared with others. Isa 66:19,

"I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations — ..., and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations."

Is glory something God creates?

Isa 43:7 He created us for His glory. What an amazing thought!

Isa 43:7, "...everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (See also Isa 44:13.)

Not surprisingly, He created Israel to display His glory (Isa 44:23).

The fullness of God's glory is veiled or hidden and must be revealed.

Isa 40:5, "And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Maybe I shouldn't be surprised but God is able to glorify a place, just by His presence or declaration.

Is. 60:13b, "...to adorn the place of my sanctuary; and I will glorify the place of my feet."

He has been about establishing a glorious name, Isa 63:12. (See also Isa 26:15; Isa 42:12). Actually, God is quite jealous of His glory (in the purest sense possible).

Isa 48:11, "For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another."

God lets some of His glory spill over on us. I don't get it. But I'm glad it is true.

Isa 60:1-2, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. 2 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you."

He, Himself, will be our glorious crown.

Isa 28:5, "In that day the Lord Almighty will be a glorious crown, a beautiful wreath for the remnant of his people."

I can't wait to be in His presence and see Him in His glorious fullness.

Addendum: All uses of "glory" in Isaiah - Isa 4:5; 6:3; 8:7; 10:16, 18; 13:19; 14:18; 16:14; 17:3, 4; 22:23, 24; 24:16, 23; 35:2; 40:5; 41:16; 42:8, 12; 43:7; 44:23; 45:25; 46:13; 48:11; 49:3; 58:8; 59:19; 60:1, 2, 13, 19; 62:2; 66:12, 18, 19.

ISAIAH 29:13

Isaiah chapter 29 gets a lot of attention in the New Testament. In addition to what we'll look at below, Is 29:10 is quoted in Romans 11:8-note; Is 29:14 is quoted in 1Cor 1:19; and Is 29:16 is quoted in Romans 9:20-note.

Maybe one of the reasons this chapter gets a lot of attention is these words are directed at Israel...God's people. It is a harsh rebuke. And, Is 29:13 specifically is one of God's most direct accusations.

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men" (Isa 29:13).

The worship of God's people was not heartfelt. Their worship had become fleshly, human -directed. Their response to the God who had chosen them and saved them was to create rules and regulations that made up their worship.

There is really nothing new under the sun. Jesus quotes this Isaiah passage hundreds of years later in chastisement of the religious (Matthew 15:8, 9; Mk 7:6, 7). Ouch. I'm sure my worship falls short of what God deserves.

So, what ARE God's measuring sticks for worship?

First, the accusation was that their hearts were far from Him. Therefore He must be looking for a heart that is close to His. (Remember, David was commended for being a man after God's own heart.)

Second, apparently, God is not pleased with rules of worship. He apparently desires a more spontaneous response to Him out of thankfulness and gratefulness. Jesus referred to it as worship in spirit and in truth. The more rules of what it should look like, the less genuine. Jesus adds in Mark 7:8, "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men." Wow, is that easy to slip into. They tease at Texas A&M that anything repeated three times becomes a new Aggie tradition. Are we that much different in our evangelical worship?

Third, the result of merely following rules is people who have a lot to say but the words are empty. Again, ouch. I'm wondering if most of our personal and corporate worship has too many words, not enough silence, not enough spontaneous expressions of wonder and awe.

So, our response to this rebuke should be to want to have a heart that is close to Him.

What does that look like? To want what God wants; to stay close to His Word; to want to obey; to operate by faith; to understand our total dependency on Him; to seek justice; to reflect His character to others.

“God, please guide my heart into greater depths of merely being close to You. And, may that be reflected in proper worship of You.”

ISAIAH 30:15

Just today I had someone say, “I wish God would tell me what to do.” He has! We just don’t much like His answer. Turns out we aren’t much different than the people of God in days before.

“This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel says: ‘In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it’” (Is. 30:15).

We are so geared to wanting to earn our salvation and work hard to make circumstances go our way. God’s way of salvation is narrow, and so is His means for sanctification.

Salvation CANNOT be earned. In fact, counting on our own efforts guarantees we get just what we deserve...a life separated from God.

Sanctification CANNOT be earned. In fact, operating that way only gets the fruits of self-effort.

So, back to the drawing board we go. If we would only take God at His Word and operate within His guidelines! I believe it is Tim Keller who says we must preach the gospel to ourselves every day. I agree with him. Not because we aren’t saved or have no assurance of salvation. But, what we tend to do is be accepted by faith and then act as if we have to clean up our act to be accepted by God. **NO**. Over and over again we must be convinced that our relationship with God is based on His grace and mercy. It takes repentance and rest (Is 30:15).

So, too, is our sanctification. We are to walk by faith (2Co 5:7). We are to obtain the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note - not the fruit of self-effort). Grace and mercy (cp 1Ti 1:2, 2Ti 1:2-note, He 4:16-note, 2Jn 1:3) is to continue to mark our lives in relationship with each other. It takes quietness and trust.

But all of us slip, thus the exhortation to stay in the Word, be reminded of things of the Spirit, allow the Spirit to convict us of human effort.

So, let us be reminded: repentance, rest, quietness, and trust. That is REALLY hard to do. I put it in the same category as Hebrews 4:11a-note, “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest,...”

Make effort to rest. Hmmmmm. I guess that is what it takes: focused energy at realizing we are to rely on the power of the Spirit rather than on our own strength.

Related resource: Study the concept of "Rest" in the Bible

ISAIAH - STRENGTH

I find that I have the very same question that the Psalmist asks. From where does my strength come?

God declares that He has strength (tied to wisdom and understanding).

Isa 10:13, “For he says: “By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding. I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their kings.”

It doesn’t take much to look around and see the evidence of God’s strength and great power.

Isa 40:26, “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.”

God’s followers can have great confidence in declaring that God is our source of strength. (See also Isa 28:6; 45:24; 49:5.) Note how closely strength is tied to salvation (repeated twice in this verse.)

Isa 12:2, “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my

song; he has become my salvation."

Interestingly, God Himself declares He is our strength whether we recognize it or not! (Note that salvation surfaces again.) (And in some cases He'll strengthen some anyway, even if they don't acknowledge Him. See 45:5!)

Isa 30:15, "This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it."

Nevertheless, man tries it on his own. (More on this verse in a subsequent Reflection.)

Isa 31:1, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord."

His followers are chided for not relying on His strength.

Isa 50:2 "When I came, why was there no one? When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you?"

It is clear there are times when we either don't sense God's strength or we are desperate and we cry out for Him to indeed be the very thing He declares to be. (Note that strength is tied to salvation, once again.) (See also Isa 51:9; 52:1.)

Isa 33:2, "O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress."

We are called to pass along God's strength to others who are in need.

Isa 35:3, "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you."

The Messiah will demonstrate God's strength.

Isa 63:1, "Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, **mighty to save.**" (Play [Mighty To Save by Laura Story](#), [Mighty To Save by Hillsong](#))

God promises His strength to us. (This is possibly my favorite verse in all of Scripture.) (See also Isa 58:11.)

Isa 41:10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

I'll end with the greatest concentration of references to strength in the book of Isaiah. In it we find God's character, many promises, our condition, and hope!

Isa 40:28b - 41:1, "...The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and all; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. 41:1 "Be silent before me, you islands! Let the nations renew their strength! Let them come forward and speak; let us meet together at the place of judgment."

"...Be our strength every morning..." (Is 33:2).

ISAIAH 31:1

"Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord" (Isaiah 31:1).

This verse is pretty self evident, but let's be straightforward in order to not miss a thing.

Woe - In other words: "A weighty judgment be upon you"; "how sad that you find yourself in this position"; "watch out!"; possibly even as strong as "a curse be upon you"; we might say today "shame on you".

Egypt - This apparently was the country of choice when it came to breeding the finest horses for warfare. It represents all the places (any of the places) we turn to for our deliverance from a situation that leaves God out of the picture. This would be similar to James' recognition that we do the very same thing with regards to wisdom. He says of earthly wisdom,

"Such wisdom does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil" (James 3:15).

Horses/chariots/horsemen - This isn't an indictment of horses, stagecoaches, and cowboys. These are the human resources we manipulate outside of God's will for our own purposes. Today, for our country, it could easily be armored tanks, unmanned aerial vehicles, or "more troops". For our company, it might be stock splits, public offerings, savings accounts, manipulated quarterly reports or bailouts. For us as individuals, we might reach for a cure-all medicine, just work harder, positions of control, our influence, or our wealth. These are just some of the things we throw toward fixing a problem outside of total dependence upon God.

Go down, rely, trust, do not look or seek help - Now, here is the heart of the matter. We are going it alone. We are seeking our own way. We work out of our own (limited) strength. We try everything we can think of first. We rely on our own insight. We'll do anything and everything except what is needful...admitting that we are weak, limited, totally dependent upon someone outside of ourselves.

Holy One of Israel, the Lord Yes, He is the ONLY source of strength that meets our need. He is whom we should turn to first.

If these leaders had known their law and had been seeking to obey God they would have known that the Law warned them against the tendency of the flesh. Deut 17:16, "The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, "You are not to go back that way again."

Bob Lepine of FamilyLife says,

"...These men of Judah would have recognized from their own hymnbook that their leaders were involved in folly."

Ps 33:16, The king is not saved by a mighty army; A warrior is not delivered by great strength. 17 A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.

Ps 147:10 "He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man. 11 The LORD favors those who fear Him, Those who wait for His lovingkindness."

What should have been their legacy? Maybe something more like this. "Blessed are you who have known My Law and followed My directions. Blessed are you for NOT seeking to strengthen yourself as the world would do. Blessed are you who seek after Me, who rely on My Spirit, who trust in My Word, who wait for My lovingkindness to provide what you need.

Blessed are you who ask,

Where does my help come from?"

And answers,

"My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth (Ps 121:2-see commentary).

ISAIAH 32:1, 8

There are two key verses in this chapter, tied together in an indirect way in that they both relate to leadership.

Isa 32:1, "See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice."

When Israel asked for a king during the prophet Samuel's days, they sort of had it right. They had it wrong in the sense that they wanted a human ruler over them like all the other nations. They looked to the wrong place for a model and they looked for the wrong kind of king. They had it right in that we do indeed need a king. We need One who will reign in righteousness and who will use rulers (human agents) who He has instilled with a proper sense of justice.

This is, of course, in contrast to the disobedient (even apostate) leaders Judah was experiencing.

We need the right kind of king... the King of Kings (Ezek 21:27; Da 7:13, 14). Praise God, we have One!

Isa 32:8, "But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands."

Nobility. Now there is a word that has basically been run out of the English language. (Who wants to be known as noble? And does anyone really know what it means anymore?)

I find it interesting in Isaiah's prophecies that he breaks a bit from his predominant style and includes here what is in essence a proverb. How do you know a man is noble? Well, he makes noble plans and he is known for his noble deeds. I guess this could be circular reasoning if it weren't so darn practical. It feels a bit like wisdom; you know it when you see it in action.

These noble plans gain this reputation because they have as their aim to bring good to others (not self...that wouldn't be noble now, would it).

ISAIAH - SERVANT

A study of the use of "servant" in Isaiah is a bit all-over-the-board, but nevertheless insightful and helpful.

We would not be surprised to find servant used in reference to a human agent as opposed to one's master (Isa 16:14; 21:16; 24:2). In a few references we find servant referring to Isaiah himself (Isa 20:3; 50:10). And indeed other humans also receive this title (Eliakim, Isa 22:20; 36:11; David, Isa 37:35; prophets Isa 44:26; 54:17)

The nation as a whole, representing the people of the nation of Israel, and Jacob are referred to as God's servants (Isa 41:8; 44:1, 2; 44:21; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3, 5, 6, 7). These often carry a nearby indication that these servants have been chosen. (This is important in a later description that includes you and me!)

Isa 41:8-9, "But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, 9 I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you."

The Messiah is God's servant.

Isa 42:1, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations." Also, Isa 52:13; Isa 53:11

One of the more difficult passages to interpret is Isaiah 49:3-7.

Isa 49:3-7a, "He said to me, 'You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor.' 4 But I said, 'I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand, and my reward is with my God.' 5 And now the Lord says — he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength — 6 he says: It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." 7 This is what the Lord says — the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel — to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers..."

God's servant is mentioned four times directly and in pronoun form seventeen (17!) times, making this the most concentrated passage of references to a servant in the entire book. We would automatically assume this to be exclusive references to the Messiah except for this servant's confessing his sense of failure (due to Israel's lack of proper responses.) It is possible that this is similar to Is 7:14 (young woman having a child as a sign) that has more than one fulfillment. In any case, it is clear that the New Testament writers clearly see the Messianic aspects of these verses

You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will display My splendor...His servant to bring Jacob back to Him and gather Israel to Himself...I am honored in the eyes of the LORD...I will also make You a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth...

The followers of the LORD are referred to as servants (Isa 42:19; 63:17; 65:8, 9; Isa 65:13, 14, 15; 66:14). And, they, too, are often referred to in these contexts as chosen. (It isn't difficult to see that New Testament believers have been grafted into Israel (See Romans 9).

And, in one of the action items that comes from this brief study, we see that those chosen servants of God are also by definition witnesses of His.

Isa 43:10-12, "You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you

may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. 11 I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior. 12 I have revealed and saved and proclaimed — I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God."

I called you. I said, 'You are My servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. (Is. 41:9)

ISAIAH 33

Isa 33:2, "O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress."

This is the plea of every genuine believer:

- We know we need God's grace because we are grossly inadequate in and of ourselves.
- We long for Him because all other things we have tried have been found wanting.
- We desperately need for Him to be our strength, and we need it every day. (God gave manna enough for each day.)
- We desperately need for Him to be our deliverer. (Those times of distress come so very often.)

Isa 33:22, "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us."

Judge, lawgiver, king. Although these three roles have been demonstrated several times in Israel's history, here is a unique combination of the three roles which have found themselves woven into the very fabric of the United States of America's constitution: judicial, legislative, and executive. It is an effective model, but it is merely that, a model. The only source of salvation is the One who fulfills all three aspects to perfection, the Lord Himself! And, He so boldly claims that He is OUR judge, OUR lawgiver, OUR king. Once again, showing that He is personal. One day we will see the Messiah rightfully reign using all three roles perfectly. Today, we are loved by Him who embodies all three in His very character. It is this very person who promises to save. Hallelujah!

ISAIAH 34

Isaiah is drawing to a close the section of his book that emphasizes judgment. In chapter 34 he calls the nations together again (Isa 34:1) to declare and to warn (come near, listen, pay attention, hear).

"The Lord is angry with all nations; His wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, He will give them over to slaughter" (Isa 34:2).

Not a message I'd want to hear.

Their slain will be thrown out, Isa 34:3

My sword has drunk its fill, Isa 34:5

In the midst of this description he paints a picture of what is happening in the heavens simultaneously with this judgment.

All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll... (Isa 34:4a).

This sounds curiously similar to a re-creation of this world that is declared to come according to Revelation 21.

Whether this is a description of that day or not, Isaiah is clear in verse 8 regarding the eventuality of God's judgment and the purpose for this judgment.

For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause. (Isa 34:8)

Vengeance. Retribution. It is what we deserve, what we have earned, if we are found to be outside of God's grace. In this case He is defending the place of His own people. They (Israel) didn't deserve it any more than we do. But, they were chosen. We are chosen. We have a defender!

ISAIAH - IDOLS

Introduction

I believe it is possible that when we (the western church) talk about idols we are too quick to jump to a definition that sounds something like “an idol is anything in your life that takes the place of God” and then we go on to talk about money, position, power, other more obvious addictions, etc. We rarely take the time to look directly at the Scriptures and declare what it declares, at least as a starting point.

I know that very few of us have a physical object that has been crafted to represent a god that we bow down to and look to for answers in life. But, this does still exist in our world. Let’s not overlook that reality and let’s see what Isaiah has to say about it. (I agree that good interpretation and application will get us back around to realizing that we, too, can be guilty of idolatry without having a physical object created to look like a god. But that ISN’T what Isaiah is referring to.)

Some Basics

Isaiah clearly is referring to things made by man’s hand. And, a part of the idolatry (in their heart) is expressed in physical bowing to these man-made objects.

Isa 2:8, “Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made.”

Men prayed to these objects (45:20).

Isaiah even details how they were made. Isa 40:19, “As for an idol, a craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it.” (See also 41:7). Israel’s neighbors had idols. In fact they excelled Israel’s craftsmanship (Is. 10:10, 11; 19:1).

God is very jealous of that which belongs to Him alone.

Isa 42:8, “I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”

In the midst of this idolatry, the Lord declares that He alone will be worshipped. There will be a day when these idols which had been made to be worshipped are cast away. (See also 30:22; 31:7)

Isa 2:17-20, “The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, 18 and the idols will totally disappear. 19 Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. 20 In that day men will throw away to the rodents and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship.”

The heart of the issue for God is one of worship and trust.

Isa 42:17, “But those who trust in idols, who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’ will be turned back in utter shame.”

At some points we see God giving man over to his desires. He actually mocks the idols, calling upon Israel to use them to tell the future and to save them.

“Go ahead. Try it. See if it works” (Is 41:22; 48:14; 57:13).

The Meat of the Matter

The key/primary passage is found in Isaiah 44:13-20

“He shapes it in the form of man, of man in all his glory, that it may dwell in a shrine. 14 He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow. 15 It is man’s fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. 16 Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.” 17 From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, “Save me; you are my god.” 18 They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. 19 No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, “Half of it I used for fuel; I even

baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?" 20 He feeds on ashes, a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, "Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?"

In this passage we see that the idols were man-made, usually wooden (and metal, Isa 48:5). From the materials they fashioned a god and bowed down to it. They even went so far as to asked it to save them.

The irony of it is all clearly stated. From the very same piece of wood, some is burned for fuel and another piece is worshipped. Mankind cannot see this irony for their minds are closed. Their hearts have misled them, even to the point of trying to save themselves. (Ge 8:21 "...even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood....: Jer 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?") God declares that He finds this idolatry is a detestable thing.

He prefaces this passage with a passage regarding the one who crafts the idol...a mere man.

Isa 44:9-13, "All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame. 10 Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit him nothing? 11 He and his kind will be put to shame; craftsmen are nothing but men. Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and infamy. 12 The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals; he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm. He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint. 13 The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker; he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses...."

This effort is worthless, just as the physical object is worthless. Those who would promote idol worship are caught up in their own blindness. The end (the object) is that it profits nothing. The one who crafts such an object will come to shame. They will be humbled.

Isaiah is not blind to the inner workings of the heart, as well. He recognizes that religious activity or any activity that is man following his own path is the same as idolatry.

Isa 66:3, "But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol. They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations;..."

Responding to God's Word

It would be relatively easy for most of us to dismiss idol making and bowing to graven images.

Our response should be two fold. First, we should react with sadness. Those who are caught up in the deceitfulness of the heart, the blindness of their eyes, and misunderstanding of their minds desperately need God to invade their lives, radically change their hearts, minds, ears, and understanding. They need to be rescued, saved. Our hearts should break with sadness, not react with disdain and contempt for what might appear to us to be barbaric behavior.

Second, we should immediately recognize that we, too, are either in the same condition or have been redeemed from the same condition. Their sin is no greater than our own. We "have chosen our own way" "delighted in our abominations", pursued things that are "worthless/profit us nothing", we too "don't stop to think", we "trust" in man-made pursuits.

"Oh, God, give us understanding for the plight of the idolater and help us to see the degree to which we have been redeemed (Thank You) and be honest about the degree to which our flesh still clings to things of this world for our significance rather than find it in You."

Isaiah 34:4-8, 16b-19

Isa 38:4-8, "Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: 5 "Go and tell Hezekiah, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city. 7 "'This is the Lord's sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: 8 I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.'" So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down."

I am so grateful that God answers prayer. Every time. And by that, I mean, He takes all my prayers, hears my Savior intercede on my behalf, listens to the Spirit who groans in expressions I wouldn't understand, and then filters my requests through the grid of His being my loving and sovereign heavenly Father (Matt 7:11). I may not get what I think I want and I may not get it when I want it. But THAT too is an answer. His answer may be yes, it may be no (I have something better for you), it may be wait.

Hezekiah had asked for extra years to live. Wow. That is bold. Was it presumptuous? Was it selfish? (By the way, God knows how to handle those kind of requests, too. He is still bent to want our good and His own glory even when our requests may not have the most pure motives.)

God gave him fifteen more years and also sent a miracle as a physical demonstration of the trustworthiness of His promise. Amazing. Now that doesn't happen every day.

(I wonder what everyone else in the world thought was happening as the sun (rotation of the earth?) shifted for a few minutes (hours?) (See 2Chr 32:31 for another historical account).

It is not ours to know ahead of time if (when) God chooses to respond miraculously . I'm glad it isn't automatic. (I've been thankful for some unanswered prayers in the past.) I'm glad He cannot be manipulated. My trust is in a loving AND sovereign God who moves as He chooses for my best and for His glory.

Isa 38:16b, "...You restored me to health and let me live. 17 Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back. 18 For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. 19 The living, the living — they praise you, as I am doing today; fathers tell their children about your faithfulness."

This is a pretty amazing set of statements. Here is a king who has asked God for a big thing ("heal me and extend my life"), has received the very thing he asks for, and on top of that receives a miracle to confirm God's answer. His response? Gratefulness and praise.

- Hezekiah acknowledges God as the source of his healing.
- He acknowledges God was in control of the length of his days.
- He actually looks back at his suffering and can now see that it was for his benefit. (Do I thank God for my suffering?)
- He notes that it was God's love that motivated God to keep Hezekiah alive.
- He hints that if his sin was to be counted against him, God would have no business answering Hezekiah's request.
- Interestingly, he has great perspective knowing it is his responsibility (and anyone who has breath) to bring praise to God.
- He uses his own experience to serve as an exhortation for all the living to give praise to God and to teach their children to do the same.

(Trivia? This is the first of only five times when "fathers" are mentioned in Isaiah.

"I, too, LORD, want to be a vessel of praise to You, the One who does not hold my sin against me, and who by Your love keeps safe by Your faithfulness. '... They praise You, as I am doing today... '"

ISAIAH 35

Isaiah 35:8 "And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness."

I'm intrigued by this little tidbit regarding future events. This may not be actually 4 lanes of pavement, but clearly it is some kind of pathway for multitudes to move physically from one country to another.

Isa 11:16, "There will be a highway for the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt."

Isaiah gets pretty specific regarding its destinations.

Isa 19:23, "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together."

This highway with a godly name isn't just for anyone.

Isa 35:8, "And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. 9 No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, 10 and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

God has an intended purpose for these highways (apparently more than one) in the future.

Isa 49:10b, "He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water. 11 I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up. 12 See, they will come from afar — some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Aswan."

At one of these references as a very familiar ring to it.

Isa 40:3, "A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord ; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. 5 And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

John the Baptist was the preparer and Jesus either was the highway Himself or provided it Himself. This appears to have both a present fulfillment in our salvation (access) as well as a physical manifestation in days to come.

Isaiah 35:10, "...But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

I long for this day to come, don't you? This is the day when believers who have died prior to the Lord's return will return with Christ....destination, Jerusalem!

ISAIAH 36

Chapters 36-39 of Isaiah are an interlude in the flow of his prophecies. (The background in the historical books can be found in 2 Kings 18:1-20:21 and 2 Chronicles 29:1-32:33.)

The king of Assyria, Sennacherib, comes to capture Jerusalem with its king, Hezekiah. It looks hopeless for the Israelites. There is no human explanation for any hope of victory.

The Assyrian king decides to send emissaries to mock Hezekiah. They ask some questions which are intended to embarrass him, but wind up being words he will have to eat. Nevertheless, Sennacherib tries to bargain for the nation of Israel to simply bend their knee in submission. He promises great prosperity in return for such submission.

Sennacherib asks,

"On what are you basing this confidence of yours?" (Isa 36:4).

"On whom are you depending?" (Isa 36:5). (The issue of dependence or trust is brought up in Isa 36:4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 15.)

As a part of his strategy, he tries to persuade the Israelite warriors to become weak in the knees. Bob Lepine refers to this as 'bullhorn diplomacy' (hoping to cause an internal squabble or revolt).

Isa 36:15, "Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord when he says, 'The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'

Finally, the Assyrian king mocks God Himself, daring Him to come to the aid of Israel.

Isa 36:20, "How then can the Lord deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"

I have to laugh at his mocking because the answer to this question is, "Very easily!". All one has to do is read Isa 37:7, 36, 37, 38 to see how God can and does deliver Jerusalem. Yes, I know we have the advantage of Isa 20:20 hindsight, but that is indeed why we have the Scriptures, to give us God's perspective on His ways, that we might walk in them.

First, this world holds out all kinds of promises to us that if followed will be found in the end to be empty. Second, the enemy mocks

us as we turn to the LORD for our deliverance. Third, our flesh has learned bad habits of responding to temptation. So, daily, we too are faced with needing to reaffirm “on what are you basing this confidence of yours?” “On whom are you depending?” Praise God, THERE ARE ANSWERS!

“So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?’” Hebrews 13:6-note

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:19, 20, 21, 22, 23-note

WATER

You may wonder how important “water” could be in the book of Isaiah. You may be thinking “Howard is really scraping the bottom of the barrel.” Well, that may be true for other reasons, but it isn’t because water is unimportant in Isaiah’s depiction of God’s ways.

I live in a desert climate. It is relatively easy for me to understand the importance of water in the Middle East. It isn’t all that difficult for me to see why God would use such a power concept to illustrate truth dear to His heart.

There are certainly plenty of references in Isaiah to specific rivers, rain, and physical water (along with other references to streams, springs, and even snow for a total of over 75 times!).

What is impressive to me is the wide range of illustrations of spiritual truth God uses utilizing water as the subject matter.

Salvation

Isaiah uses water as a metaphor for salvation or for the enjoyment of our salvation. Isa 12:2,

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Peace

Isa 48:18, “If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.” (See also 42:15; 66:12)

He could have chosen innumerable illustrations/comparisons, but he chose rivers and the sea. Can I identify all of what is important to the heart of God in this comparison? Of course not. The pursuit of the depth of its meaning is a worthy one, though.

Spirit/blessing

Water is equated with the Spirit and with blessing, Isa 44:3,

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.”

Sovereignty

A wonderful description of God’s sovereignty is found in Isa 50:2,

When I came, why was there no one? When I called, why was there no one to answer? Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you? By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert; their fish rot for lack of water and die of thirst. (See also Is 3:1; 5:6; 28:2)

God can sovereignly use water as a destructive force (Is 28:17).

One of the most powerful statements about God’s sovereignty is found in Isa 45:7,

I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things. 8 "You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I, the Lord, have created it.

Future Events

There are also a number of references to God providing water as a very physical reminder of His keeping His promises and His blessing upon the nation of Israel in future days. For example, Isa 30:23,

He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows. 24 The oxen and donkeys that work the soil will eat fodder and mash, spread out with fork and shovel. 25 In the day of great laughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill." (also see Is 27:2; 30:25; 33:16; 43:20; 48:21; 49:10, and others)

There is a future time of the LORD's reign that in part can apparently only best be described in nautical terms. Isa 33:5,6, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24,

The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness. 6 He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure... 20 "Look upon Zion, the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved; its stakes will never be pulled up, nor any of its ropes broken. 21 There the Lord will be our Mighty One. It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams. No galley with oars will ride them, no mighty ship will sail them. 22 For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us. 23 Your rigging hangs loose: The mast is not held secure, the sail is not spread. Then an abundance of spoils will be divided and even the lame will carry off plunder. 24 No one living in Zion will say, "I am ill"; and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven.

Cautions

Not all of the references to water are positive. He states clearly it is possible to rely on water rather than on God (Is 22:9,11).

Water is also used as a metaphor when it describes some of what we face as 'the water of affliction' (Isa 30:20).

Water is not always a symbol of blessing. It can also reflect the difficulties of life. But when Isaiah uses it this way, oh, what a beautiful picture he paints. Here is one of the more familiar passages in Isaiah, one in which we find ourselves clinging to God to be true, Isa 43:1, "But now, this is what the Lord says — he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the river, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior..." (See also Isa 4:6)

In some situations it is difficult to know if a given passage is speaking literally, figuratively, or both. Nevertheless, Isaiah uses water to describe both our condition and His provision. Isa 41:17,

The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. 18 I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.

Our Response?

In a very practical sense we can see direct applications when he states that withholding water from the thirsty is something the fool does (Isa 32:6). Seems to me Jesus had something to say about that in Matthew 25:44 and in Romans 12:20!

What a wonder invitation. Isa 55:1,

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. 3 Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live...

In another familiar passage we learn something about the nature of God's Word. Isa 55:10,

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Isa 58:11, The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

What a beautiful promise.

ISAIAH 37:14-17

Hezekiah gets a message from the commander of the Assyrian armies who have surrounded Jerusalem. The message is going to contain bad news: surrender or get stomped on. How is Hezekiah going to respond?

Isa 37:14

Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord. 15 And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: 16 "O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 17 Give ear, O Lord, and hear; open your eyes, O Lord, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.

Would my first response have been to go into God's presence and pray? Would I have been concerned for how insulted God would have felt over these words? Would I have called upon God to defend Himself by defending me?

Hezekiah knows upon whom He must depend:

- Lord Almighty
- God of Israel
- God (twice)
- Lord (four times) ... all in four verses.
- Hezekiah relies on the position and character of God Almighty:
- Enthroned
- Over all
- Made heaven and earth.

Hezekiah doesn't hesitate to get right to the point:

- Give ear
- Hear
- Open your eyes
- See
- Listen.

In this description I see boldness, dependence, trust, and an understanding of the nature of God. He doesn't state it here, but inherent in one's ability to rely on God is to also understand our own limitations: we are by nature weak, we are the clay (not the Potter), we are needy, we have only One place to go for our defense.

That should be my posture and first response to all of life.

LOVE and DELIGHT

One would think that God's love would permeate every book of the Bible. Certainly God's character doesn't change, so whenever He speaks or acts it is out of love. So we can indeed see His loving fingerprints on every page of Scripture.

The explicit mentioning of His love is infrequent in Isaiah. But when spoken, oh, so powerful!

God loves His people. They are His delight.

Isa 5:1, 7, "I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside...7 The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight..." (See also Is 55:3; 62:4; 65:19)

God is motivated to act out of His love.

Isa 16:5, "In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it — one from the house of David — one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness."

Others can recognize that God sovereignly provides for and protects us, directing our lives, and not holding our sin against us...out of His love.

Isa 38:17, "Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish. In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back."

Obviously He loves and delights in His son.

Isa 42:1a, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight;..."

We are precious in His sight. He honors us. He loves us. He is with us. Wow!!!!

Isa 43:4-5, "Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. 5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you;..."

These statements of God's love for us are overwhelming when placed side by side in clear statements like this.

Isa 54:10, "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you."

Not surprisingly, our redemption flows out of His love and mercy.

Isa 63:8, "He said, "Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me"; and so he became their Savior. 9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old."

Isn't it amazing that in response we can love and delight in Him.

Isa 61:10, "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness;..."

ISAIAH 39

"Be careful what you ask for, you just might get it"...goes the old adage.

Hezekiah had asked for a longer life...he got it! Now, what did he do with those years?

Isa 39:2, 4-8

Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses — the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine oil, his entire armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them...4 The prophet asked, "What did they see in your palace?" "They saw everything in my palace," Hezekiah said. "There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them." 5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord Almighty: 6 The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. 7 And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." 8 "The word of the Lord you have spoken is good," Hezekiah replied. For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my lifetime."

It appears to be a common malady that weakness(es) shows up after a victory. In chapter 38 Hezekiah is given an additional 15 years to live. In chapter 38 he displays some pride, arrogance, and irresponsibility. And to top it off, he seems to be more concerned for the security during his own lifetime than the consequences of his own sin on generations to come.

(Note that verses 5-7 predict the exile of Judah to Babylon that would take place over 100 years into the future!)

God, grant me wisdom, perspective and understand in the good times, in the successes, after the answered prayers... that I might avoid the pitfall of arrogance and selfishness and also avoid the consequences that can come my way as well as to those around me.

ISAIAH 40

There is so much in Isaiah 40. Just as chapter 1 somewhat served as a summary for the whole book, chapter 40 serves somewhat as a summary for the remaining chapters.

Forgive me for the “facts and figures”, but they add up to an important exhortation.

There are 216 verses remaining in the book of Isaiah (chapters 40-66). I’m told that of that total, 115 speak of God’s greatness and power.

Within chapter 40 itself there are 17 questions asked. That compels us to read with reflection.

(In comparison to other chapters within Isaiah there is a relatively short list of only 5 “wills, will be, will nots” and all of them in verses 28-31.)

Three sets of verses are quoted in no less than seven New Testament books:

Is 40:3-5 quoted in Matthew 3:1, 2, 3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4, 5, 6; John 1:23

Is 40:6-8 quoted in 1Peter 1:24, 25

Is 40:13 quoted in Romans 11:34; 1Corinthians 2:16a

Some of the most familiar Old Testament words are found in this chapter.

“A voice of one calling: ‘In the desert prepare the way for the LORD’; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.” Is 40:3

“And the glory of the LORD will be revealed...” Is 40:5

“All men are like grass..the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.” Is 40:6, 8

“...but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isa 40:31

Interestingly, utilizing the NIV as the basis of word counts, the word “God” is only used once in the chapter in verse 3 (uncharacteristic in comparison to the rest of the book). In contrast, there are eleven different names or pronouns for God used over 49 times in just this one chapter. Clearly this chapter is all about God. It speaks of His greatness and power, His compassion and grace, and His great provision of salvation for His people.

All of that leads to this primary conclusion: Isaiah 40 is one of the grandest chapters in all of Scripture. It is worth spending time in these 31 verses. I’ll try to resist the temptation to camp out too long here in my Reflections, but suffice it to say there is more than one key verse or set of verses.

I challenge you to read it at least three times and then read it out loud to yourself at least once. You’ll be glad you did!

Here’s an example of what you can find...

Our family once again followed a family tradition and watched Dickens’ A Christmas Carol (a musical) the week before Christmas. I was struck in the last dream sequence that Scrooge is finally overwhelmed by the consequences of his stinginess and pleads with the ghost of Jacob Marley, “Speak comfort to me, Jacob”. He can no longer rest. He can’t stand the message of truth. He can’t live with the consequences of his behavior. He cries out for relief.

All of us desperately seek comfort when we are caught in our sin. We all need relief that comes from outside our selves.

The God (of Jacob, pardon the pun) declares in the first verse of chapter 40, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." He delivers EXACTLY what our soul longs for. Comfort. Not to comfort away circumstances, but genuine soul-rest in the midst of those circumstances.

(More from chapter 40 soon.)

ISAIAH 40:10, 11

Is 40:10, 11, "See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and His arm rules for Him. See, His reward is with Him, and His recompense accompanies Him. 11 He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young."

I find these relatively unfamiliar verse (in comparison to so much of the rest of chapter 40), so very comforting. The Sovereign LORD who comes with power, who rules, is also pictured AT THE SAME TIME as our shepherd...one who gathers us up, carries us, and gently leads.

Powerful, yet He tends like a shepherd

Ruling arms and gentle arms

Deals out both recompense and reward (and accurately knows the difference)

Knows His flock

Wants us close to His heart. (I don't want to stretch this too far, but note that He is the One who brings us close...not the other way around.)

He rules, yet He leads gently

Viewing Him only as our Creator, Maker, Sovereign God isn't enough.

Viewing Him as our best friend, similarly falls short.

He is all powerful AND our shepherd! He commands all of the universe that is so far off AND He brings us close to Him.

ISAIAH 40:28-31

Isa 40:28-31, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

I know this may be a strange reaction, but I don't even know what all of this means and I STILL long for it to be true for me. Isn't that the way Scripture works sometimes? There is no way that we can understand all the depth of God's truth, but when we read it, it resonates with our soul. The Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit...and we call out Abba, Father.

He is everlasting...I think I understand His eternity in a technical sense, but I long to be in His presence forever to gain a deeper understanding.

He is Creator...got that one nailed, too, except for all those times that I want to take over and be in control. Yuck.

He will not grow weary...Wait a minute. I thought WE won't grow weary. Guess I've rushed through this text before.

His understanding no one can fathom....Isaiah has that right. Reminds me of Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!"

He gives strength to the weary....Praise God! What we all desperately need. I can relate to the weariness of life. I'm hesitant to say I know what it is to be weak. I enjoy far too many blessings this world has to offer to say I know what it is to be weak. But so many around the world testify to His power in their weak situation.

Even youths grow tired and weary...yes, that's us!

Young men stumble and fall....it doesn't take many days of life to fall (sorry for the pun) into this category.

But those who hope in the Lord....count me in.

Will renew their strength...that must be coming directly from the LORD because I can't overcome my weaknesses much less drum up strength for the need of the moment.

They....must mean the last people referred to... "those who hope in the Lord"

Soar on wings like eagles....many a preacher has waxed eloquently about this, but in the end I still don't truly understand this.

They will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint...Isn't this the part that we all identify with; we long for this to be true; we plead to God to provide this at any given moment. To me this is a picture of stamina, grace for the moment, strength in my weakness.

This all reminds me of "Apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) Implied in that statement is "with Me you can do all things". More clearly stated, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13).

ISAIAH - I AM

It shouldn't surprise us that following such a grand chapter (40) about the greatness of God that we should be introduced to Isaiah's first (of many) uses of the idea of the LORD being the "I am".

Thirty one (31) times in the remainder of the book, God inspires Isaiah to reveal the greatness of God through the use of the "I am".

Of course one of the natural question is, "I am what?" Well, God answers that specifically.

Isaiah 43:12, "...You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God. " (See also 45:22; 46:9)

In addition, he states the following:

- I am the LORD Isa 42:8; 43:11, 15; 44:24; 45:5, 6; 45:18; 49:23; 60:22
- I am He Isa 41:4; 43:10, 13, 25; 46:4, 4; 48:12; 51:12
- I am the LORD your God Isa 41:13, 43:3; 48:16; 51:15
- I am God Isa 43:12; 45:22; 46:9, 9
- I am the first and I am the last 44:6; 48:12
- I am with you Isa 41:10; 43:5
- I am your God Isa 41:10
- I am doing a new thing Isa 43:19

When looking at all these references we see close, clear ties to some common elements.

Expressing God's Exclusivity – no other (10 times) (Isa 42:8; 43:10, 11; 45:5, 18; 46:4, 9)

This "I Am" is not distance but is tied directly to helping, sustaining, and/or strengthening (10 times) (Isa 41:10, 13; 46:4)

This "I Am" is our Creator (9 times) (Isa 45:18; 46:4; 48:12; 51:13)

And as if to eliminate all doubt, He is tied to the other titles of Holy One of Israel, Redeemer, Savior, King, and the LORD Almighty.

Interestingly, fives uses are tied closely to His choosing Israel (Isa 41:9, 10; 48:12; 51:13)

I thought you might enjoy merely reading a number of the references (not all). They are beauty in and of themselves.

Isa 41:4, "Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD — with the first of them and with the last — I am he."

Isa 41:10, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. "

Isa 41:13, "For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. "

Isa 42:8, "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols."

The most compact congregation of ideas regarding the I AM is found in Isaiah 43:3-25. I've reduced it greatly here.

"For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior... 5 Do not be afraid, for I am with you... 10 "You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. 11 I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior. 12 I have revealed and saved and proclaimed — I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "that I am God. 13 Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?" 14 This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:"For your sake I will send to Babylon and bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians, in the ships in which they took pride. 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King....25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

Isa 44:6-7, "This is what the Lord says — Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. 7 Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come — yes, let him foretell what will come. "

Isa 44:24, "This is what the Lord says —your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself..."

Isa 45:3-7,"I will give you the treasures of darkness, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. 4 For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. 5 I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, 6 so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. 7 I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things."

Isa 45:18, "For this is what the Lord says — he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited — he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other. "

Isa 45:22, "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other."

Isa 46:4, "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I carry you; will sustain you and I will rescue you. "

Isa 46:9, "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me."

Isa 48:12-13, "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. 13 My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together."

Isa 48:17, "This is what the Lord says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go."

Isa 49:23, "...Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed."

Isa 51:12-16, "I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass, 13 that you forget the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction? For where is the wrath of the oppressor....15 For I am the LORD your God, who churns up the sea so that its waves roar — the LORD Almighty is his name. 16 I have put my words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of my hand — I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the

earth, and who say to Zion, 'You are my people.'"

ISAIAH 41

Chapter 40 was all about God. But, God doesn't speak in the sense of being quoted in the entire chapter. Chapter 41 is quite a contrast. God speaks and makes reference to Himself (Me, My, or I) 31 times as translated in the NIV.

I memorized 41:10 a LONG time ago. It remains one of my all time favorite verses in all of Scripture.

Isa 41:10, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' (New American Standard)

Why is this one of my favorites? Because it expresses the dynamic impact of God's presence!

- Do not fear
- Do not anxiously look about you
- He will strength us
- He will help us
- He will uphold us with His righteous right hand (This makes me think of Hebrews 1:3, "...sustaining all things by His powerful Word...")

All of this is true because the One who is our God is with us. If He were absent we would have cause to fear and be anxious. We would be left to fend for ourselves in our own strength.

BUT THAT IS NOT THE CASE. He is near. He is present. In fact His righteous right hand upholds us.

Bob Lepine makes the following wonderful set of observations regarding these promises of God. He's got us surrounded!

- "I am your God"--over you.
- "I am with you"--by your side.
- "I will strengthen you"--from inside of you.
- "I will help you"--all around you from wherever the enemy comes.
- "I will uphold you"--from underneath you.
- Over you, by you, inside you, around you, underneath you (surrounded).

ISAIAH - CHOSEN

Close to the heart of God is His love for His people. He expresses that in strong terms "I am your God" (41:10) and "my unfailing love for you will not be shaken" (54:10).

Another description or demonstration of His love for His own is His declaration that He has chosen them.

"But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, 9 I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you" (Isa 41:8-9).

This is very specific. It is in contrast to rejecting them. It is for a purpose of serving Him. He clearly has the descendants of Abraham, the Hebrews, Israel, the Jews in mind (see also Isa 45:4; 65:9, 15, 22).

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations" (Isa 42:1).

This is equally specific, but here tied directly to His chosen One, the Messiah, His Son. (See also Isa 49:7.) He, too, was chosen for a purpose of servant hood. Here God mentions that this indeed delights the Father. He also includes the presence of the Spirit and the results of bringing justice to the nations.

This delight is not merely in His Son but on any whom He has chosen.

"To give drink to my people, my chosen, 21 the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise" (Isa 43:20).

"You are my witnesses," declares the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he..." Isa 43:10a).

Here He adds that another purpose for having chosen a Person, the sent One, the Messiah is that we might know, believe, and understand who God is!

"But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. 2 This is what the Lord says — he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen" (Isa 44:1, 2).

One of the exhortations for those who are chosen is that we are not to be afraid. Right along side of this exhortation is our Creator's commitment to help us.

I find great comfort in knowing that the Creator, God of the Universe, draws us close to Him because it delights Him to do so.

ISAIAH 42

Isa 42:1-8, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.

What an unbelievable verse. The Messiah is identified, embraced, and sent on a mission.

Notice the trinity: "My" (Father), "Chosen One" (Son), "Spirit"

In fact, the three persons of the trinity are mentioned twelve times in one verse! (My, servant, whom, I, my, chosen one, I, I, my, Spirit, him, he.)

The Son is upheld by the Father; the son is the delight of His Father; the Spirit is a gift from the Father to the Son. ("...This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew3:17; 17:5)

Of course, we are left with questions. When will this "justice to the nations" occur? How will it occur? What will it look like? Whatever expression it takes, it obviously is a work that can only be accomplished by the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But wait...there's more:

Isa 42:2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; 4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."

Isa 42:5 This is what God the LORD says — he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all that comes out of it, who gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it:

Isa 42:6 "I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles,

Isa 42:7 to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Isa 42:8 "I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols."

The Father chose the Son (Is 42:1,2) for a purpose.

The Father also chooses a people (Is 42:6, 7) for a purpose: to be a light, open eyes, to free captives, to release those in bondage.

Philip P. Bliss wrote "Hallelujah! What a Savior", published in 1875. The fifth verse reads:

When He comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then anew His song we'll sing:

ISAIAH 43-49

Isa 43:1b-3a, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. 3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...."

This should be considered a very personal, first person passage because the pronouns "you" or "your" is mentioned twelve times in less than 3 verses. Take heed!

We have nothing to fear, for we have been redeemed. If God has done the greater thing (forgiven our sin), certainly He can and will do the "lesser" thing of protecting us. (Jesus used the same argument with the Pharisees regarding forgiveness and healing.)

By the way, He says "when", not "if". This is similar to James 1:2,

"Consider it all joy when you face trials of various kinds..."

Trials, dangers, suffering are inevitable at some level. All the more important that we heed what has gone on before.

"Now these things occurred as examples, to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did...these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us..." 1Corinthians 10:6, 11.

What wonderful words to read, "...for I have redeemed you...you are Mine".

Water and fire, both sources of sustaining life are also potential dangers. When they turn dangerous, God promises His presence in the midst of them. This reminds me of Psalm 23:4,

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me..."

Once again declaring truth that is based on God's presence.

Who is making this promise? The LORD, God, the Holy One of Israel, our Savior!

Isa 43:22-28 of this chapter are quite a litany of Israel's rebellion against God. In the midst of that He says,...

Isa 43:25, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

This reminds me of Romans 5:8,

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

This has been on God's heart for all the ages...to reach us in our sinful state when we were totally incapable of helping ourselves.

"He who blots out your transgressions" as well as "and remembers your sins no more". Forgiven and forgotten.

Isa 44:6, 8b "This is what the LORD says — Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God...You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one."

God answers His own question here, "No, there is no other Rock."

A Rock. Solid. Good for a foundation. If big enough, you can hide behind it. Hurts if you fall on it. A safe place if high enough.

Isa 8:13, "The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, 14 and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. 15 Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured."

A sanctuary to some; a stumbling stone to others.

Isa 17:10, "You have forgotten God your Savior; you have not remembered the Rock, your fortress."

A fortress.

Isa 26:4, "Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal."

Eternal.

Isa 30:29, "And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel."

The Rock of Israel.

Isa 51:1, "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn;"

Our source; our Creator.

Isa 28:16, "So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed."

A stone. Tested. Precious. The Cornerstone. A Sure foundation. My Rock. There is no other!

Isaiah 45:21c-22 And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. 22 Turn to me and be saved, all you; for I am God, and there is no other."

"no God apart from me"; "none but me"; "no other" ...well, He certainly is clear on that point!

An invitation is extended to the nations, to the ends of the earth. This is an open invitation to all people, in every age, to be saved. Unbelievable.

Isn't it amazing that our Father can be both a righteous God AND a Savior? Our human response would be that a righteous God has to dispense judgment and a Savior has to disregard our offenses. No, no!

Paul, too, knew we would struggle with that issues. He probably struggled himself. Nevertheless, he wrote in Romans 3:23-26,

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."

Charles Spurgeon documents that it was Isaiah 45:22 and a simple sermon that God used to open His heart to salvation. Paul reached back and quoted this in Romans 14:11. Many have been drawn to Christ because God's Spirit used Isaiah's appeal in their life.

Our part is to turn to Him. To look. Remember the bronze serpent Israel was to look upon for their deliverance. It foreshadows the only One that saves, God's provision. Our part is still as it was before, to turn and look upon Him.

Have you turned from your sin? Have you looked upon Him who is both righteous and our Savior?

Isaiah 46:4 "Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you." Isaiah 46:4

Age is a funny thing. It is so relative.

When you are a child it seems like time goes by so slowly. Over the decades we find ourselves saying more and more often, "Where does the time go?"

I'm at the age (51) that when I start doing subtraction (to find out how many years ago such-and-such happened) I'm discouraged (or at least surprised) with the results of the math! "It can't be THAT many years ago, can it?"

I was talking to my physical fitness trainer yesterday about the up-and-coming winter Olympics. After much dialogue about the various events he brought up hockey and the Lake Placid Olympics where the "miracle on ice" happened. I mentioned I watched that game. He responded, "Oh, you SAW it?" Then I did the math. He wasn't even BORN when that occurred and I was already 24 way back then. Ugh.

Through all those years we search for our grounding. Unfortunately we tend to look within ourselves. Search as we might, it won't be found there. We can only be sustained by Someone outside ourselves. God declares "I am He", "I am He who will sustain you", "I will carry you", "I will sustain you", "I will rescue you"

“Even to your old age and gray hairs”. Thanks a lot, Isaiah! I tell people I’m at the age that I just hope it turns gray before it falls out!

Yes, age is relative, but God’s sustaining power is NOT!

“Do not fear for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely, I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10

Isaiah 47:4 “Our Redeemer – the LORD Almighty is His name – is the Holy One of Israel.”

Redeemer, LORD Almighty, Holy One of Israel

I wrote not too long ago about the use of Redeemer in Isaiah. Excerpts are repeated here.

The title of Redeemer is most often tied close to other titles for God, the most common being “the Holy One of Israel” (6 times). It is also tied to other names (King, Lord Almighty; Mighty One of Jacob; Lord; Father; King).

Here are a few examples:

Isa 47:4, “Our Redeemer — the Lord Almighty is his name — is the Holy One of Israel.”

Isa 54:5, “For your Maker is your husband — the Lord Almighty is his name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.”

Isa 49:26b, “...Then all mankind will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

In the most direct language available, God specifically, directly, and personally declares “I have redeemed you” (Isaiah 44:22; 43:1; 48:20).

These words are warm and soothing to our soul. Isa 43:1, “But now, this is what the Lord says — he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”

Isaiah 48:17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, Who leads you in the way you should go.

I’ve been learning a bit lately about listening to God. I don’t do it enough. I don’t do it very well. I believe I’m scared to do so. Down deep I’m probably scared of what He’ll ask me to do. That is a lack of faith on my part. It is selfish. I’m pretty comfortable with the way things are. I don’t want too many things to change.

Look at the following list: God wanting to speak to us and His call for us to listen...all in this one chapter!

“Listen to this, O house of Jacob...” Isaiah 48:1

“...I told you these things long ago...” Isaiah 48:5a

“...I announced them to you...” Isaiah 48:5b

“You have heard these things; look at them all...” Isaiah 48:6a

“From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you.” Isaiah 48:6b

“You have neither heard nor understood; from of old your ear has not been open.” Isaiah 48:8a

“Listen to Me, O Jacob...” Isaiah 48:12a

“Come together, all of you, and listen...” Isaiah 48:14a

“I, even I, have spoken...” Isaiah 48:15a

“Come near me and listen to this:...” Isaiah 48:16

“From the first announcement I have not spoken in secre:...” Isaiah 47:16b

If only you had paid attention to My commands...” Isaiah 48:18a

“This is what the LORD says...’I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.” Isaiah 48:17

What would happen if I listened more? This last passage says if I listened more I would actually be in tune (in alignment) with what is best for me. And, I would receive direction in “the way”. Dr. Max Anders used to (maybe still does) teach a seminar called “The Ways of God”. Jeremiah reminds us that they are not OUR ways.

I operate far too often on the assumption that I know what is best for me. "No need to bother God. No need to check in with Him. I've got this one covered."

What do I do once I've listened to God?

Psalm 95:7-8 says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts..."

This is repeated in Hebrews 3:15 and again in Hebrews 4:7. Must be important!

The Israelites are highlighted as an example of what NOT to do.

"the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith...those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience."
(Hebrews 4:2b; 6b)

It appears I have much work to do.

- I am to listen to God. For me that means to slow down, stop and listen.
- I am to have faith, believing that what God has said is indeed, first of all, true and second, is best for me.
- I am to obey. Without acting on what God has said, I'd be hardening my heart out of disobedience (which is actually an absence of faith.)
- Pray for me. Join me. Let's listen to God and then do what He says.

Isaiah 49:1-7

Isa 49:1-7, "Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. 2 He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. 3 He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." 4 But I said, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God."

5 And now the LORD says — he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength — 6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

7 This is what the LORD says — the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel — to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers: "Kings will see you and rise up, princes will see and bow down, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

This is the second Servant Song in Isaiah (the first was Isaiah 42:1-7).

These words remind me of Isaiah 53, which is so famous. These, too (Isaiah 49:1-7), should become equally familiar words to us regarding the coming Messiah.

Bob Lepine says, "Jesus is the polished arrow of God, released at the right time to accomplish its purpose..."

Look at the detailed prophecy...

- Come as a man: born, birth, formed in the womb
- Set apart from birth, from the foundations of the world
- Hidden, concealed, but then used to display God's splendor!
- His reward is with His Father...what intimacy
- Mouth like a sharpened sword (Heb. 4:12)
- An instrument of victory
- Just the right time (Gal. 4:4)
- Will bring God glory
- He represents all of Israel
- Goes beyond Israel (Acts 13:47) to the Gentiles
- Servant – governed by God

- Will be despised and abhorred
- Will not fail
- Will face discouragement (weeping, disappointment, rejection?)

First and foremost He was to bring Israel back to God in repentance (reconciled relationship)

One day He will receive worship by kings and rulers

It is tempting to be critical and say, "How could the Jews miss the Messiah with this kind of detail available to them?" But the answer is found in our own human, birth condition. They COULD NOT understand. Neither could I. Praise God for His opening our eyes, our ears, and providing understanding.

"We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." 1 John 5:20

ISAIAH 50-51

Isaiah 50:4-9 is yet another Servant Song (#3) within Isaiah. Clearly written about the coming Messiah, there are at least 23 references (personal pronouns) to Him who would come.

A sample reads, "The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught...I offered my back to those who beat me; my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting." 50:4,6

These sound like they could come right out of chapter 53 (suffering servant), but they don't. They are here to highlight the coming Servant's obedience.

How could our Savior face all of this and more? Isaiah tells us how:

- "The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears..." Isaiah 50:5a
- "Because the Sovereign LORD helps me..." Isaiah 50:7a
- "He who vindicates me is near." Isaiah 50:8a
- "It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me..." Isaiah 50:9a

Isaiah provides us our application himself.

"...trust in the name of the LORD and rely on (your) God." Isaiah 50:10c

"I, even I, am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass, 13 that you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction?" Isaiah 51:12-13b

How easily I forget.

How easily I fear man. This surfaces:

When I'm worried of what man thinks of me

When I consider what man might do to me

When I feel overlooked

Haven't I received the comfort of God over and over again?

Don't I know that evil men will receive their just reward?

Don't I know that I would receive my just reward if not for the grace and mercy of God?

Don't I know my Maker, my Creator, my Redeemer?

Fear is common to man. In some instances it is an appropriate warning system to keep me safe. In other instances it is the flesh wanting to take control and preserve itself. Still other times it is a response that shows just how much I conform to this world's way of thinking. In still other instances our fears are instigated by Satan to oppress, discourage, to deceive, ultimately to destroy.

This Scripture is a very personal one. This isn't Isaiah speaking. This is my Heavenly Father, personalizing His message to me, to you.

Praise God, through becoming a new creation I don't have to "live in terror every day". Thank you Father for replacing my default fear position to a position of peace. Not only peace with God (in order to have a relationship with you), but the peace of God (in order to enjoy each day's fellowship with You and face each day's challenges with power and strength).

So, we have received a personal message of comfort, directly from our Father.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Isa 52:7

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Often we celebrate this verse as a missions verse, and very appropriately so. We should be grateful to God for raising up those who He uses to proclaim the gospel clearly in this culture and those who go cross cultural bounds to do the same. Their availability to God, their obedience to "go", their faithfulness to the task is indeed beautiful.

But, did you notice the synonyms for the gospel used here? They are multiple, all in one verse:

- Good news
- Proclaiming peace
- Bringing good tidings
- Proclaiming salvation
- Declaring the reign of God

When understood biblically, although they have distinctions, these five are all basically the same thing.

- All of them are verbal.
- All of them have an action component.
- All of them have content.

Praise God for the gospel!

Rom 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Rom 15:20, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known..."

ISAIAH 52-53

Isa 52:13-53:12

13 See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him —his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness —

15 so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

53:1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Clearly this is one of the most well known passages from Isaiah. It is the last sequentially and most well known of the four Servant passages in Isaiah.

Unbelievably, this passage was written 700 years before Christ. It includes 28 different descriptions of things Christ faced/experienced. Much of it is quoted directly in the New Testament:

Isaiah 52:15 quoted in Romans 15:21

Isaiah 53:1 quoted in John 12:38 & Romans 10:16

Isaiah 53:4 quoted in Matthew 8:14-17

Isaiah 53:7 quoted in Acts 8:32-33

Isaiah 53:9 quoted in 1 Peter 2:22

Isaiah 53:12 quoted in Mark 15:28 & Luke 22:37

It is noted that portions of the passage are alluded to 85 times in the New Testament!

It is a description of our Savior, with pronouns referring to He, Him or His around 50 times (depending on translation). Interestingly, the passage is communicated in the past tense. Our Father has known from the foundations of the world His sovereign plan.

I believe that most people focus on what might be called the suffering components of this passage. It is indeed amazing to read this and take note of all the specific details that were ultimately fulfilled in the Jesus, our Messiah. (Examples include: appearance was marred, despised and rejected, crushed, poured out his soul to death.) Most of them relate to the excruciating experience of the cross itself. When we take a look at those specifics we often respond, "How could many Jews, both in Christ's day and also today, miss Jesus as their Messiah with this level of specificity imbedded here and elsewhere in their Hebrew Scriptures? The prophecy of the cross is indeed amazing.

But, there is another prophetic component that I want to highlight this time through. Please take note of the RESULTS of Christ facing the cross. The New Testament writers certainly don't miss it, but I believe our casual reading of this passage often misses within this long passage the many indications of the results of the cross.

- He shall act wisely, Isaiah 52:13
- He shall be high and lifted up, Isaiah 52:13
- He shall be exalted, Isaiah 52:13
- He shall sprinkle many nations, Isaiah 52:15
- Kings shall shut their mouths, Isaiah 52:15
- Bore our grief, Isaiah 53:5
- Carried our sorrows, Isaiah 53:4
- Wounded for our transgressions, Isaiah 53:5
- Crushed for our iniquities, Isaiah 53:5

- Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, Isaiah 53:5
- We are healed, Isaiah 53:5
- Iniquity of us all was laid on him, Isaiah 53:6
- Stricken for the transgression of My people, Isaiah 53:8
- An offering for guilt, Isaiah 53:10
- Make many to be accounted righteous, Isaiah 53:11
- He shall bear their iniquities, Isaiah 53:11
- Bore the sin of many, Isaiah 53:12
- Makes intercession for the transgressors, Isaiah 53:12

Yes, the cross was very real. But it had its purpose. Some of that purpose was to lift Him up and to humble men. Much of that purpose was to finally deal with mankind's sin problem! And still some of it was to go beyond taking something away, but to give other things in sin's place (peace, righteousness, obtain an intercessor).

I like what the ESV Bible says in summary: "Isaiah finally explains how the Holy One can bless sinful people: all the promises of God will come true for them because the suffering and triumphant servant removes their guilt before God by His sacrifice." That's what I've been trying to say. This passage not only predicts suffering but IT ALSO PREDICTS TRIUMPH. Praise God!

ISAIAH 54-58

In 1985 Jana and I moved to Austin, TX for my first role as a pastor. I started as a Singles Pastor at Grace Covenant Church. The first opportunity I had to substitute preach for our senior pastor was just prior to Easter the following Spring. Looking back at it I find it almost unbelievable that I chose to tackle this entire passage in one fell swoop. My first sermon as a pastor was "The Suffering Servant".

I'm glad my focus then was on our Savior. I'm glad that 24 years later that is still my desire....to lift Him up.

Isaiah 54:7-10 "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. 8 In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer. 9 "To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. 10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. "

These appear at first to be very harsh words, but after some thought are very hopeful words.

"For a brief moment I abandoned you" - For Israel, their exile (yet to come for those reading this for the first time) had to have felt like an abandonment.

"But with deep compassion I will bring you back" – I wonder if those same exiles read and counted on this to be true for them. God told them specifically that it would only be for 70 years. Did some of them count the days?

"In a surge of anger I hid My face from you" – It is strange to hear God speak of His anger toward us. I'm not sure if this is a synonym of his previous wording of abandonment or if it is a reflection of His genuine wrath.

"But with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you" – This is very action oriented. Yes, He is kind, but He puts it into action.

"So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again" - That is hopeful.

"My unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed" – God keeps His promises.

"Says the Lord, who has compassion on you" – OK, OK. We are getting the idea. This is the third time His compassion has been mentioned, along with the mentioning of His kindness and unfailing love.

I understand that a great deal of these details were directed toward Israel, and His covenant was with them specifically. But God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. There are times when it will feel like God has abandoned us, acted in a surge of anger, rebuked us, allowed mountains to shake (think Haiti and Chile right now) and the hills be removed. Our walk with God is not without

being susceptible to all of these things.

But, "For a brief moment...for a moment..." From God's perspective, our experiencing of these trials are but for a moment. These ALWAYS feel longer than they should. I'm amazed that Paul was able to say, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all." 2 Corinthians 4:17

But in the midst of the circumstances God is kind, is compassion, is a promise keeping God, and displays an unfailing love for His children.

His covenant of peace remains. That is VERY, VERY hopeful.

Isaiah 55:8-12 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. 12 You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

God's ways are so much higher than ours. That should draw us to His Word where we find the One we are to worship and the One we are to obey. Frankly, I find it quite comforting that God is God and I am not. (I encourage you to read Loui Giglio's book, "I Am Not, but I Know I AM".)

Isaiah is NOT saying we will know the effect His Word is having at any given moment. We must be patient, confident that His Word has its intended effect whether we know it or not. We can proceed with confidence that the One who's thoughts are higher than ours and who's ways are inscrutable is accomplishing His purposes. What comfort and confidence that brings when we faithfully minister God's Word (and at times seemingly unable to see its impact.)

I have always enjoyed verse 12 since I sang in a choir that presented a musical called Exaltation. The tune goes over and over in my mind when this verse is read. It is hard to know all God is teaching here, but it does bring some insight into Christ's words "that these very rocks could cry out". This verse might begin a summary of what Isaiah has been teaching, but I also wonder if this joy and peace and the praise they elicit are indeed indicators of God's Word having gone out effectively.

Isaiah 56:6-7 "And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve Him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship Him; all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to My covenant – 7 these I will bring to My holy mountain and give them joy in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on My altar, for My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

At the very moment I'm crafting this draft (Tues, March 16th, 2009) I am sitting in the sanctuary of a Nazarene Church on the Navajo Reservation in northern Arizona. Our daughter, Allyn, is on a short mission trip with a youth group and I have come along as a parent/sponsor/volunteer. It has been a wonderful experience to be among Navajo believers. I, once again, have grown in appreciation for the diversity of the Kingdom. My thought tonight as we sang, heard testimonies, shared burdens, and prayed for each other was that when we get to heaven, IT WILL DEFINITELY BE MORE DIVERSE THAN MY EXPERIENCE IN THE U.S. CHURCH!! For a moment, during these three days, I'm in the minority. I better get used to it, because I'll have the privilege of spending eternity with brothers and sisters from around the globe.

(This same week, our son, Kyle, is having a similar experience. He is in Honduras with 15 college students serving alongside Hondurans as they work on an orphanage.)

Isaiah records God's words in Isaiah 56 and God has the world on His mind. He is demonstrating once again that He has opened the doors of worship to all nations. "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

For the "foreigners" in Isaiah's day, God had some specific requirements in order to be considered fully devoted followers of His. They must:

a) Bind themselves to the LORD ...

...to serve Him

...to love the name of the LORD

...and to worship Him

b) Keep the Sabbath without desecrating it

c) Hold fast to His covenant

Thus qualified, they could be brought to His holy mountain (Jerusalem), and they would be given joy and their offerings and sacrifices would be accepted there.

For the last several days I have been the foreigner among our Navajo brethren. What a joy.

“The Sovereign LORD declares – He who gathers the exiles of Israel: I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.” Isaiah 56:8

He is still gathering. It has been a privilege these last several days to work alongside those gathered from among the Navajo.

Isaiah 57:15 “For this is what the high and lofty One says – He who lives forever, whose name is holy. ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’”

Bob Lepine reminds us ...

Psalm 113:4-6

4 The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens!
5 Who is like the Lord our God,
who is seated on high,
6 who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?

God is at the same time high and lifted up, forever holy, (in a high and holy place) AND with those who are contrite and lowly in spirit. Although He is above all, He is not remote. Although He is set apart (holy, He) is not far away. Although He is high, He is not inclined to be removed.

He draws near. He is with us. He purposes to revive the spirit and the heart.

To whom does He direct this kind of attention? To the contrite and the lowly.

James 4:6, “God opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Jesus expanded on this thought.

- “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3
- Blessed are those who mourn
- Blessed are the meek
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
- Blessed are the merciful.
- Blessed are the pure in heart.
- Blessed are the peacemakers.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness. Matt 5:4-10
- Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Luke 6:20
- Blessed are you who hunger now
- Blessed are you who weep now
- Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil...(Lk 6:21-22)

LORD, make me more contrite and understand the lowliness of spirit.

Isaiah 58:6,7 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?”

Isaiah is admonishing those who call themselves God’s people by asking penetrating questions regarding their piety. The people

apparently appealed to their religious observances, particularly that of fasting. Isaiah quotes the people questioning God. "How come our fasting hasn't impressed you, God?" (Howard's version)

Isaiah/God has some interesting responses to the people.

Isaiah 58:3b Yes, I saw you fasting, but why later in the day did you treat your employees so poorly?

Isaiah 58:4a Yes, we saw you fasting, but the day hadn't even ended before you were bickering and even engaged in beating each other up?

Isaiah 58:4b Come on, seriously. You can't expect Me to be impressed with this kind of fasting.

Isaiah 58:5 Are you serious? Do you think that merely going through the motions will get My attention in any significant way?

God then tells them specifically what a changed heart will look like in action:

- Loosening the chains of injustice
- Untying the cords of slavery
- To set the oppressed free
- Sharing your food with the hungry
- Providing shelter to the wandering poor
- Clothing the naked
- All rather than pursuing the desires of our own flesh.

Well, I guess a person could try to rationalize these things away and hope someone else is doing them. And, yes, some people do these things in an attempt to save themselves through good works.

But, what is MY response? That's the real question here.

Some of these are a bit easier to do than others.

Providing food and clothes to a food pantry or clothes closet is pretty easy to do. Am I doing it?

Giving to a homeless shelter is merely a check or website away. Have I done so?

Other actions of a changed heart are a bit more cumbersome:

Do I know someone who has faced an injustice or who is under slavery? Am I in a position to work on their behalf?

Unfortunately, if we don't see someone within close range we think either it isn't that big a problem or that someone else will have to do it who is closer to the situation.

Let me recommend involvement with any number of efforts that are rescuing young children from the sex trade. The group I'm getting the most frequently recommended is:

International Justice Mission www.ijm.org

IJM exists to protect people from violent forms of injustice (e.g. sex trafficking) by securing rescue and restoration for victims and accountability for perpetrators, ensuring that public justice systems work for the poor.

Another great resource is:

Equitas Group (focus on Thailand and Cambodia)

Lance Robinson, President/Founder; 2095 Lakeside Centre Way, Suite 101, Knoxville, TN 37922
865.244.3200

Involvement in this area is intimidating but nevertheless very important. First of all, it is closer than you think. Second, they desperately need financial resources to continue their work. Third, giving should draw our hearts closer to the situation and thus provide an ample prompter to pray....and, yes, to fast....this time for the good of others rather than to try to impress God.

Salvation. It is a teaching I tried to summarize earlier. Quite a task.

Isaiah 59 can serve somewhat as an Executive Summary of Isaiah's teaching on the subject. Notice the details:

The people find themselves separated from their God

"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear you." Isaiah 59:2

This separation has left them with having to deal with their guilt on their own

For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken falsehood, Your tongue mutters wickedness. Isaiah 59:3

There is no one who cries out for justice or righteousness

"No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity..." Isaiah 59:4a

The only deeds we do fall short of God's standard

"Their deeds are evil deeds, and acts of violence are in their hands. Their feet rush into sin..." Isaiah 59:6b,7

In this state there is no peace to be had.

"The way of peace they do not know..." Isaiah 59:8

Their sin is not just among each other but is an offense to God Himself. They admit that not only do they have no desire for God but actually actively rebel against Him.

"For our offenses are many in Your sight and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God..." Isaiah 59:12-13a

The wages of sin is death.

"According to what they have done, so will He repay wrath to His enemies and retribution to His foes..." Isaiah 59:18a

BUT....There is also hope in this chapter.

God Himself initiated our salvation.

"He saw that there was no one, and He was appalled that there was no one to intercede; so His own arm worked salvation for Him..." Isaiah 59:16a

He was able to work His own salvation because of His character of righteousness.

"and His own righteousness sustained Him" Isaiah 59:16b

He took on Himself what was necessary to accomplish this salvation.

"He put on righteousness as His breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; He put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped Himself in zeal as in a cloak." Isaiah 59:17

He works such that man recognizes God's greatness.

"...Men will fear the name of the LORD...they will revere His glory..." 59:19a

He will provide a redeemer.

The Redeemer will come to Zion..." Isaiah 59:20a

Their salvation is appropriated at their time of repentance.

"...to those in Jacob who repent of their sins,' declares the LORD." Isaiah 59:20b

This salvation is based on the promises made by a covenant keeping God.

"As for Me, this is My covenant with them'..." Isaiah 59:21a

The Holy Spirit indwells those who have repented. "...My Spirit who is on you'..." Isaiah 59:21b

One of the results of their salvation is that the Word of God is written on their hearts and is evident in their speech.

"...And My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth'..." Isaiah 59:21c)

Our condition is critical. But, yes, there is hope.

It is for that very reason Isaiah starts this chapter with, "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save..." (Isaiah 59:1)

My Saviour, you can move the mountains,
You are mighty to save,
You are mighty to save.
Forever, Author of Salvation,
You rose and conquered the grave,
Yes you conquered the grave.
(Hillsong Australia)

"I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly." Isaiah 60:22b

- He is LORD.
- He is in command of all things.
- He knows the best timing of things.
- When He acts, He acts quickly.

A similar thought was recorded earlier in Isaiah.

Suddenly, in an instant, the LORD Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire." Isaiah 29:5b,6

- He is LORD almighty.
- He controls (in this case) all the physical components of this world (and much more).
- He chooses the moment of "suddenly".
- He can act in an instant.

We don't often think of God's suddenness as one of His characteristics. But, it is indeed a part of His nature. We see this in one of the Psalms.

"The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer. May all my enemies be ashamed and dismayed; may they turn back in sudden disgrace." Psalm 6: 9-10

- He is the LORD.
- He knows all and sees all things.
- He is even in control of the moment when those who oppose us back down and receive judgment for their deeds.
- He can cause it to happen suddenly.

"But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." Galatians 4:4-5

- He is God (and therefore in control of all things).
- God acts for our best and His glory AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME.
- His actions have purpose and therefore are timed perfectly.

We are the beneficiaries of God's grace and goodness when He chooses to act suddenly. (I'm sure Mary was so totally unprepared for the suddenness of the angel's announcement and the presence of the Holy Spirit within her. Suddenly she was pregnant.)

I'm not sure that I recognize, much less appreciate, when God acts suddenly in my life. I spend way too much time complaining about what appears to be His slowness. When He acts, my reaction is all too often, 'It's about time'. If I only knew and embraced His timing, rejoicing in His goodness, rather than acting as if I'm entitled to His benevolence.

“Lord, please sharpen my eyesight to see YOU and to be grateful for both Your perfect timing and Your quick/sudden action in my life.”

Isaiah 61:1-3 “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.”

Jesus quoted the first part of this passage and applied it to Himself in Luke 4:17-19; 21. (With that being the case, we see all three members of the Godhead: Spirit, LORD, me...present in verse 1!) This is the very passage about which He proclaimed, “...Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:21)

Interesting the reaction it caused. In Luke 4:22, “All spoke well of Him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from His lips.” But after He gave some explanation (Lk 4:23-27)... “All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove Him out of the town, and took Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.” (Luke 4:28-29)

“He walked right through the crowd and went on His way.” (Luke 4:30)

- Some are drawn to Christ. Others want to drive Him away.
- Some want a Messiah. Others think the idea is a bunch of hogwash.
- Some like what they hear. Others are repulsed by the implications of what they hear.
- Some know they have a need only He can meet. Others want Him to solve the problems they see in others.
- Some realize they are created in the image of God. Others want to create Him in their own image.
- He is either our cornerstone upon whom He builds or a stumbling block upon which we are broken.

In the end, the question is, “Who is Jesus?” Not, “Who do you want Him to be?”

Isaiah 61:1-3 declares,

- He is the One upon Whom the Spirit of God has descended.
- He is the One the Sovereign LORD has appointed. (redundancy #1)
- He is the anointed One. (redundancy #2)
- He is the preacher of Good News.
- His focus was on those who were poor, brokenhearted, captives, imprisoned by darkness, mourners and those in grief
- He is the One who binds wounds, frees captives, releases prisoners from darkness, comforts and provides by bestowing crowns, lavishing gladness, and drawing out praise from despair.
- He works as a proclamation to the world saying this is the time of the LORD'S favor as well as the day of vengeance.
- He transforms us into vessels of righteousness, a work that only He can do, and that reflects His glory.

Wow!

By God's grace, I believe. I trust. I bend the knee. I follow.