

# Sing a New Song, Part II

by  
Dr. Manford George Gutzke

## Chapter 7 – The Freedom Of A Sovereign God (Isaiah 41:1-4; 44:24 - 45:13)

When we are speaking of the freedom of a sovereign God, we mean God's freedom; not the freedom that He will give somebody else but the freedom that He has Himself, free to do as He will. Isaiah was preaching to the remnant to strengthen their faith. Faith is nurtured through understanding, in which the believer can see God's hand. Any person is influenced by circumstances surrounding him. The believer refers every aspect of his personal situation to God, and he tries to understand the ways of God. Any person tries to understand events by noting natural processes involved. This is based on an outlook which views the world as an impersonal whole. The natural man does not see God and cannot see God and so he thinks of the world as if there were no God. But the spiritual man believes in God and believes that God is on the throne overruling all that happens.

A ship at sea is affected by the wind and the waves, rolling in the buffeting sea. But the course of the ship is not determined by the wind and the waves. There is a captain who controls the helm, who directs the course of the ship according to chart and compass. The natural man lives his life like a ship afloat without guidance, driven by the wind and tossed by the waves. The spiritual man lives his life by the Word of God and he may be driven by the winds some and tossed about by the waves some, but he finally arrives at the port which God has prepared for him, because he is being led.

In Isaiah's time Judah had been conquered by Babylon. Jerusalem and the temple were about to be destroyed. Judah was helpless and hopeless before the might of the Chaldeans. And this time God would not intervene to strengthen or to aid Judah to defeat the pagans. The people of God had exhausted the patience of God. We are reminded of the Scripture:

And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that also is flesh (Genesis 6:3).

And Babylon the pagan power would be destroyed through the activity of Cyrus, who was himself a pagan, and was not interested in serving God.

Isaiah is concerned for the remnant. He wants to nurture their faith, so he calls upon them to look up to God. As if he urged the sailor not to be dismayed by the wind and the waves but to check his compass to stay oriented on his course to his harbor.

Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: . . . let us come near together to judgment (Isaiah 41:1).

In other words, let the remnant keep silence. That is, let them not try to explain or to attempt to rationalize. Let them simply look to God. Let them renew their strength. You will remember how believers are to do that: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Let them renew their strength by waiting upon the Lord. Let them draw nigh unto God. Then they will understand, when they take stock and

think. It will be clear to the remnant that God's hand is overruling events.

The situation was bad in Judah and was getting worse. The whole country of Judah was under the dominance of pagan people. This was a great strain and a challenge to the faith of the believers. God was their God, but here the pagans were overruling them. In the confusion that this would cause, Isaiah called upon the remnant. "Look up, keep quiet, don't start explaining things. Look up and look into the face of God." Because they believed in God they could readily understand that what happened was what He would have happen. The overwhelming dominance of the pagans from the east was achieved because God willed it that way.

Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them, and passed safely; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he (Isaiah 41:2-4).

This is a demonstration of the very presence of the pagans in Jerusalem. This is a demonstration that God is sovereign over all the world. He can overrule the acts of men so that "surely the wrath of man shall praise thee." All this is beyond human understanding. No wonder Paul exclaimed

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out (Romans 11:33)!

No wonder we speak of Him as a sovereign God. To accept the fact that God can use an unbeliever, a pagan, that He will use an unbeliever, a pagan, to do what will work out His will is to enlarge our conception, anyone's conception, of the freedom of a sovereign God.

In Isaiah's time Judah was suffering under the dominance of Babylon. Because of their spiritual waywardness God would not help Judah to cast off the yoke. But now He would bring in Cyrus the Persian who was a pagan, who would crush Babylon and release the Jews to go back to their land and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. This was an absolutely incredible prospect, which would baffle human reason or logic; but it was true. That is what actually did happen. However this did not mean that God approved Cyrus or endorsed him. God used him though Cyrus was unaware of that.

In Isaiah 44:24 through 45: 13 Isaiah revealed the Word of God to Israel and to Cyrus. First in chapter 44 verses 21-28 the Word of God is addressed to the remnant. Here are gracious words that are only true for the believers who are called here "Jacob" and "Israel." Listen to this:

I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it . . . for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel (Isaiah 44:21-23).

These words would never refer to people whose hearts were far from the Lord but Paul helps us to understand when he writes "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). Although the nation as a whole had drifted far away from God, so that destruction was their only prospect, there was always the remnant who sincerely sought the blessing of God by humbly repenting and seeking His face. It was of these that Malachi wrote:

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him (Malachi 3:17).

Then Isaiah proceeded to reveal to the remnant God's Word to Cyrus. This is recorded in chapter 45 verses 1-13. As we read this we note a use of the word "anointed" which helps us to grasp the real meaning of the term. This means a person is ordained for a specific task. It has no reference to the personal nature of the individual. It only refers to his function that he is to perform. Cyrus was a pagan and would personally share the fate of all pagans, but in this event in which he was going to act he would be

doing the will of God though he was unaware of the part that he had in all this.

This is the way in which Isaiah was preaching and teaching to try and help the remnant get ready for the things that were going to happen. He wanted them to know that all that was going on was under the hand of Almighty God. This is how Isaiah felt about it. He wanted them to realize that God was sovereign, which means that He was free to do as He saw fit to do. You and I do not need to feel badly about leaving all in God's hands. God is not evil. He is not going to do anything evil. He is not unrighteous. He is not going to do anything that is wrong. But He is going to be free to choose of the different options before Him what He wants to choose in accomplishing His purpose and His will. No human being can anticipate everything that God will do, nor even understand what He does when He does it, because God's ways are past finding out.

We need not think that the Word of God to Cyrus as recorded by Isaiah was necessarily given directly to Cyrus in any personal way. This is what the remnant was to understand about God's mind in this whole event. When we look at chapter 45:1-3 we see that the military campaign of Cyrus would be successful with ease. God would be blessing Cyrus. No opposition would stop his progress. By announcing Cyrus' achievement before it took place God gave evidence that He is the living sovereign. In verse 4 it is openly claimed that the career of Cyrus was actually shaped on account of Israel.

For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me (Isaiah 45:4).

Cyrus would be doing the will of God even though he, Cyrus, did not know God nor believe in Him. As a matter of fact God's use of Cyrus to perform His will would serve notice to all the world that God is God, and there is none else. God actually strengthened Cyrus for his achievement in order that all nations would know that God is God.

I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me (Isaiah 45:5).

In His almighty power and in His sovereignty God claims responsibility for all that happened.

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things (Isaiah 45:7).

This is a startling, amazing statement. I can remember when I first read it I was not sure that the translation was right. I was not sure that the copy of the Scriptures I had was right. Just think of it. God saying, "I form the light," that I can understand. "And created darkness," this might be all right. "I make peace," yes. "And create evil," oh no! But that is the way the Scripture reads. "I the Lord, do all these things."

It is hard to grasp the full meaning but one conclusion seems obvious: the believer can rest in his confidence that nothing is going to happen out of God's will. Satan is real, and the peril we face at all times in every direction is real, but over all is the sovereign God in whom we can trust. I can make that statement one time and share it here with you, but it seems I should make it over and over and over again. When people write to me and in their correspondence they tell me of how it goes with them, there is ample evidence repeated over and over that Satan is real, and the peril we face at all times in every direction is real. Then I have to remember and try to tell them, over all is the sovereign God in whom we can trust.

An even more amazing word comes next.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the Lord have created it (Isaiah 45:8).

We are so inclined to think that righteousness is something we do. Righteousness would mean being right with God and acting in His will. Here we are reminded in this verse that we are to be reconciled to God by

His own grace and mercy. God Himself does all that brings this to pass and to Him belongs the glory. This helps us to understand Paul when he wrote:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Because all this is true Isaiah could later write this word of comfort and assurance to the remnant.

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord (Isaiah 54:17).

Believers do not manage this themselves. It is not something they do. God does it. I personally have cherished this as a very precious promise. Since my standing before God is not the consequence of my efforts, I do not lose it, and I cannot lose it by my failures. God gives it to me as a gift. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When Paul is discussing the sovereign control which God exercises in dealing with men, pointing out that God works to bring His will to pass, he faces the reaction that some would have.

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus (Romans 9:19-20)?

That is the way Paul put it.

Isaiah gave the same warning.

Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth (Isaiah 45:9-10)?

The proud heart of man would be tempted to blame God for his own misdeeds. Neither Paul nor Isaiah ever describe how God would deal with such impudence, but they warn against it.

Isaiah then reveals the Word of God as a challenge to those who would question God, that they should look at what God will do.

Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me (Isaiah 45:11).

After all He is the Creator, the Maker. And Isaiah wrote:

I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded (Isaiah 45:12).

The remnant can be assured that God is able to do His will. Then God reveals to them again that He will bring in another power who will do what will help His people to go free.

I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts (Isaiah 45:13).

In his letter to the Roman believers, Paul wrote:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

In our study in Isaiah we find the prophet assuring the remnant that the Lord would take care of them and

bring them into His blessing.

Believers in Christ have lived in the world for hundreds of years. Time and again the cultural influences of society have infiltrated among the company of believers. Again and again the churches have drifted into practices that have hindered the spreading of the Gospel. So often these worldly influences have been so powerfully promoted that the humble believer in Christ was quite unable to prosper in his spiritual life. But again and again developments have occurred that prove to be a blessing.

It was thus in the time of the Reformation. More recently intellectual criticism of the Bible has weakened the testimony of the Gospel among the established denominations. Many humble true believers have pined in hunger and thirst for some authentic authoritative word of God. Such intellectual emphasis comes out of the pagan world and actually robs the church of the very Word of God which would nurture faith, since "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). But God has raised up and blessed new movements in the church that have led thousands into refreshing spiritual experience.

This is the kind of thing that we can feel when we are reading this portion of Isaiah, and noting how Isaiah is preaching to those people in Israel who are faithful. Not everybody was faithful. In fact the great majority was so unfaithful that God was actually going to destroy Judah. He did allow Jerusalem to be destroyed, and the temple to be destroyed, and everything that these people had to be taken away. But God had in mind that He would eventually bless them. "The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance," and God would eventually help them.

Isaiah preached to these people, the true believers, the remnant, that God would one day work things out. They had been going through hard times and they were facing severe experiences. Isaiah told them that God did all these things. He controlled everything and worked all things together to work out His will. We need to put our whole trust in God.

## **Chapter 8 – Behold My Servant (Isaiah 42:1-9; 61:1-3)**

We are continuing our study in Isaiah.

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law (Isaiah 42:1-4).

This is the prophet's description of Messiah, whom we call Christ.

Isaiah preached this to the remnant that they might have their faith strengthened. The remnant was sharing in all the distress which was destroying Judah. They shared the common Jewish subjection to the pagan Chaldeans. The Word of God gave them no guidance as to what processes they might follow in order to be free. Actually they were not going to be able to work themselves free. But they received the promise of God that He would personally do a new thing. He would send His chosen Servant, His Messiah, who would personally deliver the remnant and make them free.

This is the way in which the plan of God would work out in the time of the coming of the New Testament. We need to be reminded that freedom would be arranged not on the basis or not on the level of their former national life. They lived as human beings in the flesh, and as such they were the nation of Israel. But when God would come to work with them to do His will He would lift them as individuals out

of the natural into the spiritual, out of the flesh into the spirit.

In the course of my personal academic career, while I was doing the studies that led to my Ph. D., I had occasion to be in a graduate class entitled "Religion in Education," where I met a number of Jewish rabbis as my classmates. I enjoyed cordial fellowship with some of them and shared in some dialogue about our respective beliefs. I found that they commonly held that the "servant" referred to by the prophet Isaiah was the nation Israel. When I realized that they had no one person in history whom they would esteem as "Messiah" I could understand how they could project their people Israel, into the role of Messiah, since they have nothing else in their consciousness.

However the Scriptures do not bear out that idea. I was reminded when I was talking with those rabbis in the university, of the ideas that were shared with me by my father-in-law who was born a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin and trained to be a rabbi. He had become a believer in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah just as he finished his training. My father-in-law shared some insights with me based upon the Hebrew words and phrases which I could not retain because of my scant knowledge of Hebrew. But one of the things that he mentioned I do remember. In Isaiah chapter 53:11 it is written: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." And my father-in-law pointed out that the Hebrew term translated "righteous" is a term used nowhere else because it implies "without any blemish whatever." This could certainly not refer to the nation of Israel but only to One that whom we know knew no sin.

My father-in-law said that in his studies as a rabbinical candidate, back in the days when he was preparing to be a rabbi, he was told that the Messiah, when He would come, would be a sinless person. He said that his teacher repudiated the idea that Israel as a nation should be considered as the "Servant." He felt that that was an ambitious idea but was not valid. It will be important to remember that no remnant of Israel ever achieved the freedom and the blessing until this very day which the prophet had announced. Even believers in Christ Jesus, living in the New Covenant, have never yet been so blessed. But the promises remain. Paul wrote: "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29).

God's program is not yet finished. Jesus of Nazareth taught that the Son of Man would return in person to establish the kingdom of God, as it is written in Matthew 24:4-51; and II Thessalonians 1:5-10. Jesus of Nazareth was killed in this world, but He achieved His triumph when He rose from the dead. This is the route the remnant must take.

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Jesus of Nazareth did not overcome the world because He was stronger than the world in any physical way. It was not by force and not by power. The way He overcame the world was that when He allowed the world to run its course and they killed Him, God raised Him from the dead never to die again. That is where the victory is and that is the route that the remnant must take.

In Isaiah 42:1 we read, "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." We are reminded of the words of that voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus of Nazareth "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). When we read "I have put my spirit upon him," we are reminded of this passage in John:

And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God (John 1:32-34).

And when we read "He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" we are reminded both of the promise to Abraham "And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3), and of the word in the New Testament "And in his name shall the Gentiles trust" (Matthew 12:21).

There can be no doubt that this prophecy in Isaiah points to the Messiah who was being promised by the prophets, and whom we know to be Jesus of Nazareth who fulfilled that prophecy. "He shall not



cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street" (42:2). This gives a picture of His public manner, quiet, meek; and helps us to appreciate His gentle treatment of sinners. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench" (42:3). As a pastor and as a personal worker, I have often used these words to comfort and to reassure some soul that was just beginning to believe the Gospel.

No matter how weak and broken the soul might be, the Lord would not destroy it to cast it away, no matter how slowly that soul might respond in weak faith the Lord would not disregard it nor quench it. And then I would emphasize "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (42:4), reminding them of the word of Paul "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Those who have their faith in the Messiah, and we understand that to mean "who have their faith in Christ" who is actually Christ Jesus, such people can have quietness and confidence in the very plan and power of God. In another place Paul wrote: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Then Isaiah reveals the Word of God to the Messiah about the work He was to perform.

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images (Isaiah 42:6-8).

This reveals an aspect of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. It would seem from this passage that God the Father would guide and empower the Messiah in all the work He would do. His deeds would not be according to His own wisdom or in His own strength. Jesus of Nazareth said:

The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do (John 5:19).

And again,

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me (John 5:30).

And so while we are looking into this aspect in the prophecy of Isaiah of "My Chosen Servant" our hearts and our minds are drawn directly to look at, to see and to worship Jesus Christ our Lord.

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). There is no more important line of truth in the Scriptures than the revelation of the Son of God. He is called the Word of God, as in John's Gospel,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men (John 1:1-4).

And then we read further:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

He became incarnate as the son of Mary as we read in the book of Luke.

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:31-33).

Mary was told plainly "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (verse 35). When God came to reveal Himself in this world He came in the form of man: one man, an individual, whom the others could handle and see.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (I John 1:1-3).

All of this points to one Person, one Individual, the One who took my place when He died on Calvary's cross. No nation died for me: one Person died for me. Some students of the Bible have proposed to consider the nation of Israel as the "servant" to whom Isaiah referred. In the light of the New Testament revelation in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, this cannot be seriously held among church people who understand that the blood of one Person, Jesus Christ, is the basis of their reconciliation to God as Father. And it is to be noted that what Isaiah predicted about the Messiah can apply only to one individual Person.

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house (Isaiah 42:6-7).

Such language as that can refer only to one Person. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness." Jesus of Nazareth was without sin. "And will hold thine hand" which obviously implies a person to person, a one to one relationship, such as between two individuals. "And will keep thee." This would mean in the sense of "guard" thee from harm. "And give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." This is what we understand the Gospel to be. This whole Scripture flows smoothly along the line of the testimony of Jesus Christ who gave Himself a ransom for many.

The description of Messiah's work of deliverance was restated in the words of our other Scripture portion.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified (Isaiah 61:1-3).

These words were quoted by Jesus of Nazareth when He taught in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-19). The record goes on to show how His teaching affected people.

And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth (Luke 4:21-22).

When Jesus of Nazareth said that these words were being fulfilled, the nation Israel was not involved: He was involved.

In this way we have clear proof that Jesus of Nazareth understood that He was the Messiah and that He had come to deliver and to comfort the distressed. When Isaiah revealed "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me" he indicated that the Messiah would not think for Himself. His ideas, His values, His goals, His ambitions would be given to Him by the Holy Spirit in the will of God. In looking at what Isaiah preached we are impressed that the aim of the Messiah had nothing to do with the national affairs or fortunes of Israel or of any pagan nation.

God has all these matters in hand to be sure. He is the overruling sovereign of all the world. He did not send His Son to guide economic or social affairs. His Son came to seek and to save that which was lost, and He is concerned about their personal affairs and experience. God is concerned about the meek, that they should be comforted. He is concerned about the brokenhearted that they should be healed. We might say the Messiah or Christ takes note of the captives and wants to set them free. He wants to deliver



those who are in bondage and He wants to comfort all who mourn. All these aspects refer to individual persons.

God cares about you, and He cares about me. Anybody can see plainly there is no reference to community affairs, to group conduct or to general principles. Such corporate aspects are no doubt real, but that is not where salvation originates. Salvation originates in the individual person.

God does deal with groups, and so He deals with churches. This can be seen in Revelation 2-3. In those two chapters He dealt with seven different churches. Christ Jesus sent messages to those seven different churches. Each of these churches had developed a distinct character which was recognized and judged by the Lord, but in each case the message pointed to individuals. It is recorded over and over again: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:22). They are the ones who are to listen. It is the one person who has the ears and only he can hear. The message may be sent to the congregation, but it is heard only by individuals.

There is something very personal about this word: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." That is not the door of a church. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This specifically points to an individual. The preaching may be done to the congregation but the hearing is done by each one singly. All this can be seen in the message of Isaiah to the remnant.

Israel as a nation would be dealt with by the sovereign God but the remnant would be dealt with one by one by the Messiah. Everything the prophet revealed about Messiah's work refers to personal individual experience. The language is plain: "the meek, the broken-hearted, the captives, the ones that mourn, the oil of joy, praise, trees of righteousness." There is no reference to any collective noun, such as "nation," "country," "government," "empire," or anything like that.

Jesus Christ is truly our Savior; and we one by one, anyone of us who believe, are actually the ones for whom He came. This is a truly amazing thing. This is something that we need to think about because it changes our whole natural outlook. The big crowd is not as important as the single soul. There could be a great company of people jostling around Jesus of Nazareth, but the woman who said "If I could just touch the hem of His garment" is the one who touched Him, and she was the one who was healed. May the Lord grant that each one of us will draw nigh unto Him personally.

## **Chapter 9 – To The End Of The Earth (Isaiah 45:18-23; 49:1-6)**

In this study we shall be considering the worldwide scope of the Gospel. Paul wrote:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed (Galatians 3:8).

In the New Testament Jesus of Nazareth was identified as Christ, and His ministry on earth was closed with the Great Commission.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

We who are believers in Jesus Christ have always considered His marching orders to His church to be "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

In studying the portion of Scripture in chapter 45 of Isaiah, it will be well to read from verse 17

to the end of the chapter verse 25.

But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation (Isaiah 45:17).

The word "everlasting" used here is exactly the word used in the New Testament.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

Let us note again that this word could not apply to political or social or economic affairs. In no temporal situation could there be "everlasting salvation." We should remember Peter said in I Peter 1:10-12 that the prophets may well have puzzled over this. But in the light of New Testament events involving Jesus Christ we can understand that they, the prophets, were writing about salvation as it is performed by God in the spiritual heavenly realities. This is basic in any understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 3:1-8 we see the first instance when the Gospel confronted the world in need. As Peter and John on their way to worship God in the temple met the lame man, they were asked to help him.

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee (Acts 3:6).

I cannot help but feel that this is our guidance in the world today. I am sure humanitarian philanthropic projects like the Red Cross, Care, and other humane activities are pleasing to God and worthy of His name; but this is not salvation. Sometimes I wonder what believers today have to give to the needy that is not "silver and gold." When your own congregation runs out of their benevolent funds, so they have no money left, do they have anything to give?

When Israel is mentioned by Isaiah does this mean the earthly nation, descendants of Abraham? We need to heed Paul's instruction in Romans.

For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed (Romans 9:6-8).

That is the way Paul put it. When Isaiah is speaking to the remnant, he refers to the remnant as Israel. They inherit the promises given to Abraham.

In our time we should distinguish between Israel in the Old Testament times whose national entity was finally destroyed by Assyria and Babylon, and Israel in world history as referring to the Jews wherever they have scattered, and Israel as the nation in the near east since World War II and Israel as in Scripture. When Paul writes "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26) is he not referring to souls who respond to the Gospel?

There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins (Romans 11:26-27).

Who can possibly do this but Jesus Christ? And can anyone claim this has been among the nations in this world? But it has been done in the case of every soul born again in Christ, when the Messiah has accomplished His work with the remnant.

In Isaiah 45:18-22 the prophet sketches the significance of the Gospel. In verse 18 God is referred to as the Creator who made the world on purpose, not haphazard, not by chance, but with intent. God had something in mind when He created the world. In verse 19 the Gospel promises are guaranteed to be valid. In verse 20 the remnant is to turn away consciously, deliberately, from the vain popular notions of the pagan world. And in verse 21 there is a direct call to the whole world. There is no other idea that has any validity. The words used are "There is none beside me." All of this we find in this passage in Isaiah.

In that same chapter in verse 22 the call goes out over the whole world. The open invitation is

given to all men.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else (Isaiah 45:22).

We recognize this as the message that all missionaries take everywhere. They go out to tell all nations that salvation is available to all men. God is no respecter of persons: "whosoever will" may come. But we need to keep at least two facts in mind. First the reason the way is open for anyone to come to God is because Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross for the sins of the whole world. The missionary is authorized to tell all men that their sins have been expiated, and the way is now open and clear for them to come to God in Christ. And in the second place being saved involves their being born again, coming to God involves being regenerated. Each believer will be changed. Paul wrote:

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Corinthians 5:17).

When Jesus of Nazareth came to the lame man beside the pool of Bethesda He asked him "Wilt thou be made whole?" That question confronts every soul that hears the Gospel. Do you want to be saved? Are you willing to let God change you? I feel that we need to be very faithful at this point. Any number of people would love to be saved if that meant that they would be excused for everything they have done in the past, and would be given freedom to do anything they want to do in the future. They would be glad to buy that, but that is not the truth. Salvation does not come that way. Any person can be saved but in being saved he will be changed. And if a person is not willing to be changed, it will not happen.

In Isaiah 23 the Word of God reveals the one objective that God has in mind as He proceeds in His sovereign program. It will be the case with every soul He saves. That soul will worship God, submitting to Him, and praising His name. God will bring this to pass for His own name's sake. The saved soul believes and yields because "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

It is astonishing and stirring to think that all of this truth that we know in the Gospel where it is set out so clearly in Christ Jesus and in the disciples, was pictured by these Old Testament prophets. The Old Testament prophets spoke of a salvation that was going to come when they testified of the grace that should come to people in the days of the New Covenant, when God was going to do something over and above anything that had been done before, and different from anything that had been done before. Because what God does makes it sure, that if you believe in Him you will be saved. You will be saved by God because it is God that worketh in you "to will and to do of His good pleasure."

In Isaiah 49:1-6 the Word of God revealed to Isaiah the thoughts of the Messiah and the thought of God who sent Him. In verses 1-3 is revealed how the Messiah understood His own mission.

Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified (Isaiah 49:1-3).

This indicates that the Messiah was not chosen on the basis of his own achievement and works. Before He was born God had in mind that He, the Messiah, would serve in a special work. "From the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name." We are reminded that Mary's child was called Jesus before He was born. Verse 2 indicates that the Messiah would be an effective worker prepared for the service by God Himself. In verse 3 we are reminded of the occasion from the voice from heaven which identified Jesus of Nazareth – "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

In verse 3 the name "Israel" is used. Looking at the passage as a whole it seems clear the Scripture is referring to one individual. The original promise was made to Abraham, he was one man, and to his seed. Paul makes special emphasis to point out that that promise was in the singular, not seeds "plural" but

to his "seed." This promise was repeated to Isaac and then to Jacob who was surnamed Israel. This name "Israel" was used to refer to the man Israel and to the nation Israel. Both inherited the promise. Since Messiah would be one of the nation "Israel" the name could be used to imply that the work of Messiah would be a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham "in thy seed shall all nations be blessed." Paul pointed out that Christ Jesus was the "seed" mentioned in the promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:16).

There is also a problem of interpretation in verse 4. As we feel this passage expresses the mind of the Messiah, whom we hold to be Jesus of Nazareth, we come to this verse with some sense of awe. This is the verse:

Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God (Isaiah 49:4).

Can this be the thoughts of Christ Jesus? These words seem to reveal a sense of failure, yet they also reveal an abiding confidence in God. We can feel here is a pattern of the heart cry of many a mother who has struggled to lead her children into helpful acceptable ways of conduct, and has been discouraged again and again. But she persists because she knows that God approves what she is doing, and will bless her efforts. But could this be the thoughts of the Messiah, of Jesus of Nazareth?

Then I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God (Isaiah 49:4).

Paul wrote about the resurrection of Jesus Christ's body, "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power" (I Corinthians 15:43). Bible students have often wondered about the words of Jesus of Nazareth on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Matthew 27:46)? When the Son of God emptied Himself and became flesh, we have always felt that He limited Himself in human physical strength. He could be wearied, He could be in a deep sleep, He stumbled when He was carrying His cross; and other such instances. Are we to think that He experienced the limitations of human expectation? We do know that when He came unto His own, His own received Him not.

Could this be a word to each of us in our witnessing and our serving the Lord? Regardless of the apparent futility and uselessness of our efforts, should we still persist? Can we take this word to ourselves "Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God?"

And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth (Isaiah 49:5-6).

It would appear from these words that Messiah would come after Israel had been scattered among the nations. In the course of history Assyria had destroyed the northern nation Israel, and had scattered the Israelites throughout the empire. Babylon had conquered the southern nation of Judah, and had taken the Jews captive to other parts of Babylonian empire. But in line with the historic promises God would yet bless Israel. The people expected that Messiah would bring all Israel back to their homeland in triumph. Even in the days of Jesus of Nazareth, this was the common hope of the Jews. They expected to be delivered from their enemies, and to be united in the Kingdom of God.

The fact is that Jesus of Nazareth did not set up a political leadership. In His time the Jews were not delivered as a nation. This helps us to see the fitness of this Scripture as referring to the Messiah when we read: "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." The Jews were not delivered from Rome, but in the resurrection the promises of God to Abraham and to David were gloriously fulfilled. The Kingdom of God will be established in spiritual reality and all the remnant being born again will enjoy in it all the blessings that God had promised. Not

only will it be true that "all Israel will be saved," but this will include a host of Gentiles. "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Paul discusses the fulfillment of this prophecy through Christ Jesus and the preaching of the Gospel in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans (Romans 11:11-30).

It is important to remember when one read "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:26), that Paul also pointed out "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). Actually it is the remnant who will inherit the promises made to Abraham and to David. This remnant will be related to God in the New Covenant, being regenerated, born again by the Word of God. And this remnant will include the Gentiles who believe the Gospel, accepting Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord, who are regenerated, born again, by the Word of God.

God will undoubtedly deal with Jews in the world and with the modern Israel in the Near East, but any such dealings are not to be taken as fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and to David. When Jesus of Nazareth was confronted by Pilate He was asked, "Art thou a king then?" Jesus of Nazareth had just told Pilate in answer to Pilate's question "Art thou the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33):

My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence (John 18:36).

Any attempt to relate the message of Isaiah to the remnant to any modern political or national issue is not valid, and will only lead into confusion and error.

This is the mystery which Paul understood was hidden throughout former times and now is revealed in the Gospel.

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Ephesians 3:3-6),

And then again in the book of Colossians Paul writes:

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:26-27).

And so we see that Messiah was to call the true Israel as those of the remnant. He would call the ones who believed in God, and a host of Gentiles who would believe through their witness and testimony. He would call them to God that they might be constituted together into the Kingdom of God by the power of God Himself.

## **Chapter 10 – Exalted Through Suffering (Isaiah 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12)**

In our last study our attention was focused upon the outreach of the Messiah, the Christ. He would come to Israel. In fact He would come out of Israel in human form, and He would deal with the situation as it involved Israel. They would be scattered among the Gentiles, and they would be in bondage. But God would set them free and bring them together in Himself. In so doing He would redeem the descendants of Israel from their distress because of sin, but He would also call many Gentiles to come to God.

These believing Gentiles would share in the blessing of Christ according to the promise made to



Abraham "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed. " Paul understood that he had a special mission to preach this truth to the whole world. Paul wrote in Ephesians:

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:3-9).

But in our present studies we are to think about what Christ did to accomplish this mission. It is our common conviction He died for us. A more complete statement would be He suffered and died for us. The record is plain, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). We shall note that He suffered actual physical abuse. He endured the opposition and the hostility of the rulers of His own nation. Yet such experience would not be as grievous as what He faced when one of His own apostles betrayed Him.

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me (John 13:21).

The title of this study "Exalted Through Suffering" needs to be carefully understood. Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead, He did ascend into heaven, where He was made both Lord and Christ. And Peter said in his sermon on Pentecost "That God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). Paul wrote:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name (Philippians 2:8-9).

There is no limit to His exaltation, but it should be kept in mind this is not what He achieved. This is what He received. It is helpful to keep in mind the Son of God came in human form to die, but God raised Him from the dead. His suffering was part of His dying but it was not a process by which He could be exalted. He was exalted by the power of God.

Christ Jesus could say as He finally died on the cross "It is finished"; and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He was finished. He was done. But God raised Him up, and gave Him a name which is above every name. We can think that He passed through suffering which was forced upon Him by men, and that He was exalted by God, as a gift to His own obedient Son.

We should not be tricked into the impression that all suffering brings exaltation by any natural process. In Isaiah 50:4-9 there is revealed the thought of the Messiah as He enters into the task of redeeming and delivering the remnant. In verse 6 it is clear that the wisdom of the Messiah, which enables Him to speak a word in season to them that are weary, is not His own wisdom. It was given to Him. Jesus of Nazareth said it openly "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (John 14:24). He often emphasized this truth saying, "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him" (John 8:26). And again, "I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (John 8:28).

In Isaiah we read:

The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting (Isaiah 50:5-6).



We see that He deliberately humbled Himself. We are reminded of the words of Jesus of Nazareth to Peter, when Peter would have fought to protect Him on the night that soldiers arrested the Lord.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be (Matthew 26:53-54)?

The physical abuse which Jesus of Nazareth suffered was just as ugly as any war atrocity. It is described in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It is spiritually stimulating to read and reread these accounts in order to remind ourselves of the price our Savior paid to deliver us. In Isaiah chapter 50 verses 7-9 is revealed the confidence the Messiah had as He submitted Himself to the treatment He received. "For the Lord God will help me." There is no hint that He thought He could manage on His own.

Believers need to learn this great truth: the outcome does not depend on themselves. To be sure they will be in it, they will be involved, but they are not left to themselves. The Messiah said: "Therefore shall I not be confounded." The Messiah would be sure that He was in no danger of being confused or upset, as He would be if He were defeated or forsaken. His eventual triumph was guaranteed by the Lord God Himself. "Therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isaiah 50:7).

The Messiah expected to move ahead in His service regardless of how He was treated. There was nothing the enemies could do that could prevent the completion of His task. He had no fear that He would be embarrassed by any defeat or lack of success.

Then the Messiah flings His challenge directly at His opponents. "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me" (Isaiah 50:8)? The Messiah knows that Almighty God has undertaken to justify everyone who trusted in Him. He knew that God would justify Him and support Him in any contention. "Let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me" (Isaiah 50:8). The Messiah is ready to confront any adversary. He is ready to stand up face to face with any foe. He challenges anyone to meet Him in close confrontation. As when David ran to meet Goliath in combat, unafraid because God was with him, so any believer can face any enemy knowing that God is with him. The Word goes on:

Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up (Isaiah 50:9).

In this passage we are given insight into the assured confidence of the remnant. The Messiah will lead against any opposition. This is the way in which Isaiah saw these truths about the coming days when the Messiah would come to lead the remnant out into freedom. He was going to do it but He was going to suffer while He did it.

We shall see as we continue looking into this that the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was the suffering that Isaiah saw that the Messiah would experience, was in the will of God. Christ would endure it, but He would not come out of it by Himself. He was not going to be able to go through this, and in His own strength be lifted up from there. No. He was going to enter this experience, and He would suffer and eventually He would die. We are almost shocked when we read in the New Testament that He suffered in weakness, and that He died because He was completely destroyed, physically speaking. But all the time He was God. We need to remember that Jesus Christ really died, that He really suffered unto death, but all the time He had in His heart and mind this confidence "My God will help me."

We are impressed by that, and we learn something for ourselves. So far as we are concerned, suffering will come to us. We want to be ready to go through with it. But we need to keep this great truth in mind, we do not have to do it on our own. God Himself will come and help us by His own grace and mercy.

Continuing our meditation on the suffering Servant we read in Isaiah this familiar passage:

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and ex- tolled, and be very high. As many were aston- ished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

In this Scripture, God makes it plain that the destiny of the Messiah will be glorious. The Word of God focuses attention upon the fortunes and the destiny of the individual, more than and before the his- tory and the fate of any nation or group. Scriptures deal more with biography than with history of social groups. All Scripture focuses the heart and mind upon the Son of God, the Lamb slain before the founda- tion of the world, whom the Father sent into the world to die for sinners and whom the Father raised from the dead to provide salvation for "whosoever believeth in him."

The Bible is addressed to me. Christ Jesus died for me. The Bible deals with salvation. This is not the salvation of any nation or group, but the salvation of souls who have individually accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is for all believers, but it is celebrated by individuals. The bread and wine go down one throat. So we approach the Word of God to consider what is revealed to me personally about Jesus Christ in person.

In Isaiah 52:14-15 there is revealed that Messiah will be a surprise to many. This is perhaps the only Scripture that comments on the personal appearance of Christ Jesus. His "visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men." People will be surprised because He is going to reveal hidden truths.

Apparently Messiah will not have any striking appearance. This is indeed a surprise. "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). His attractiveness is spiritual. He is "the lily of the valley, the bright and morning star." He is precious to every believer but He is not prepossessing to the public. We often forget just how the public sees Christ.

I remember something of my own difficulty to include Jesus Christ in my thinking. We live in a society that has ruled any reference to Him as sectarian. Consider the effect upon any public school student who knows that prayer is being restricted in our schools. How would the worship of Christ be received in a bank board meeting or in a corporation board meeting, or in a university faculty meeting? Listen to this:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:3-5).

This can be understood as the mind of Israel the nation. Just as it now could be the mind of the professing church. The nation might not even take the time to reflect on their own attitude toward the Messiah, but the remnant who share the public life of the nation would be sensitively aware.

In our churches today there is an obvious aversion of talking about the Lord Himself. I have heard preachers earnestly presenting some theme about what the church should be doing, while not even mentioning the name of Jesus Christ. I have heard His name used as in reference to some historical person, but more often it is a biblical term as if in quotes.

It is as if reference were made to someone who lived long ago, is now in some far away place and may possibly be seen again at some unknown future time. But to refer to Him as being present even in the sanctuary, to speak of Him as being available for any need on the part of His believers, this is so commonly not done.

I have noticed also that reference to Him is often by His earthly name of Jesus. It is rare to hear Him referred to as Christ, which is the name of His present position in power. Paul indicates that "Christ in you is the hope of glory." And speaking of his own life he said:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

How could any church member today share this blessedness when he never hears the name "Christ" from the pulpit? Believers need to remember He "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" and this was the reason He endured the cross, despising the shame.

It is natural to assume when anyone suffers that in some sense that person is getting what is coming to him for his own conduct. Israel could esteem Christ stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, thus failing to understand why He suffered. But the remnant understood.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5).

This is a clear eloquent description of His vicarious suffering. He went through all His afflictions in our place.

The remnant then in humble repentance see themselves as they are naturally.

All like we sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

Thus the remnant expressed their spiritual insight into the actual work of the Messiah as He performed it in His own suffering. This gives us a personal view of our title "Exalted Through Suffering." It is the believer who will be exalted because Christ Jesus suffered for him.

In Isaiah 53:10-12 we can see the plan of God in sending His Son to save our souls. It is when the believer shall "make His soul an offering for sin" that the Son of God "shall see His seed, shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." This is what He came to do, and when it happens He will rejoice. In this passage the Messiah is called "My righteous servant." The basis for this rare designation is spelled out in a brief sketch of all He did when He came to die for sinners that they might be saved.

## **Chapter 11 – "I Will Be With You"** **(Isaiah 41:8-16; 43:1-7)**

The message contained in our Scripture is one of precious assurance given to the remnant and to the Messiah, the Christ. Remembering that Isaiah was living and writing before the coming of Christ Jesus, it is easy to understand that his thinking and his understanding would not focus so much on Christ, who had not yet come, as upon the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He would be thinking about the promises. In New Testament revelation we understand that believers in Christ are already members of His body.

We need to realize that in the revelation of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus there is no instruction for conduct given to the "church" as such. The church is the body of Christ. Christ is the Head of the church. The church has no mind of its own, just as the members of a body have no mind of their own. However, individual believers have "the mind of Christ." The glorified Lord Jesus Christ in heaven sent messages to seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3; but that was to congregations, visible in human form. These should not be confused with the church, the body of Christ, which is invisible; whose membership is known only to God. My point is that in the Gospels, the book of Acts, and the Epistles, there is no instruction or word of God addressed to the church, as if it were a being that could act.

To understand Isaiah chapters 40-66 it will be helpful to remember that Israel as a people had forfeited their standing with God. They would not be spared the righteous judgment of God. But God would be faithful to keep His promises to Abraham and to David by sending His chosen Servant, the Messiah, the Christ, to lead the remnant of true believers into the righteousness and blessing which God had prepared for them. And it is this message that Isaiah was preaching to the remnant. Peter makes it clear that the prophets, who included Isaiah, were given to understand that the grace of God, which they foresaw would come, would be proclaimed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the way Peter put it.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into (1 Peter 1:9-12).

So when we read of the Word of God being directed to Israel, we may keep in mind that it is directed, not to the nation as such, but to the remnant who will inherit the promises. And so we read these words:

But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away (Isaiah 41:8-9).

These words should be taken in the context of God's universal sovereign control of all mankind, whom He has created and made. Among all men Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were chosen to be the channel through whom God would bring blessing to the children of men, to all the nations of the earth. Paul pointed out

For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed (Romans 9:6-8).

We should avoid the error of seeking for principles of procedure that can be taken as valid for everybody in the world, in the Word of God which was given to the remnant and to the Messiah.

In Isaiah we have this wonderful promise:

Fear thou not; For I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness (Isaiah 41:10).

This is a gracious promise which seems obviously addressed to the Messiah, to Christ. Certainly this should not be taken as applying to anybody, regardless of his relation to God. These are the words of promise to sustain Christ in His ordeal of suffering. To Him God said, "Fear thou not; For I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Then again we read these words:

Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought (Isaiah 41:11-12).

This is the prediction of the fate of those who oppose the Messiah, who oppose Christ. Just as this was true in the time of Isaiah, it is true in our day and time. There are persons, even with their names on the church roll, perhaps even serving as Bible class teachers, who do not accept the Gospel as it is in the Scriptures. They can put on an impressive display of preaching that everybody is eligible to inherit the promises of God, without revealing the fact that they do not think being born again is necessary. Often such completely ignore the truth and the function of the Holy Spirit. We must guard against such heresy.

The prophet goes on to say:

For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 41:13-14).

Then again we have words like this:

Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 41:15-16).

This is a prophetic allusion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel is referred to here as "a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth." The emphasis should be placed on the word "new." There would be some aspect in the Gospel after Christ came as Savior that would be altogether different. And that is the reason why it was called "new", and this is what can be seen when it is remembered that the way of Christ is to die in this world and to be raised from the dead.

This is something that believers find so hard to grasp in their human minds. How can you talk victory when you are looking at the cross? How can you feel that when a man dies as Jesus of Nazareth died, that he then can reign, be on the throne? But that is the great truth of the resurrection. This is something about which the world has no idea; and it is revealed in Christ Jesus for us in a brand new way. That the promise to Abraham and to David would eventually be carried out by raising the believers out of the flesh in the world, into the Spirit in the world to come, was a mystery, a hidden truth in Old Testament time. Actually it was true in God's plan all the time, but it was not shown that way in the Old Testament times.

It is when the believers are born again in the Spirit that they enter into the blessing that was promised to Christ Jesus. This is what prophets are declaring in these days. In this passage that we have been looking at we have seen how God speaks to the Messiah telling Him that God is going to be with Him and carry Him along, and help Him, and strengthen Him; and that Messiah will be the One who will bring salvation to all people everywhere.

This is the great truth that Isaiah was saying to the remnant, and preaching as he did as a prophet, he was giving the Word of God as it would appear to the Messiah when the Messiah would come. This



is all looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled all these things.

We live on this side of the Gospel. With us all the work of Christ is in the past, and has already taken place. In Isaiah's time it was in the future, it had not yet come. He was pointing forward to it. We look back to it; but it is always the truth. In the center of everything that God has revealed is this remarkable truth that Christ Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He could do it and He did it when He gave His life a ransom for many.

It is so natural to assume that if a person wanted the blessing of God, he should *do* something: as if the blessing were something to earn. But this is the very fact that needs to be carefully understood. When Jesus of Nazareth was asked what might the people do that they might work the works of God, He replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29).

Christ Jesus has worked all that needed to be done. He has prepared the meal, and His call now is "Come and dine." Paul wrote about the result of Christ's death on the cross when he said:

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:14).

The truth is that in the New Covenant righteousness was achieved by Christ Jesus, and is made available for "whosoever believeth in Him."

This righteousness is involved in a blessedness from God which is grounded in personal communion with the living Christ through the Holy Spirit, who is given to the believers in Christ by the grace of God. Personal fellowship with the living Lord Jesus Christ brings overflowing joy in the soul, and this is "the blessing of Abraham" which was promised to come "on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." It was this truth that Isaiah revealed in his prophecy as we read it in chapter 43 verses 1-7. This portion of Scripture should not be lifted out of its context and examined as if it manifested general principles that would be valid for anybody anywhere. This passage is part of the prophecy that Isaiah preached to the remnant, when he said:

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine (Isaiah 43:1).

Here it is important to apply this to believers, and not to the natural body. Such promise would not be made to any natural sinful person.

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee (Isaiah 43:2).

These promises, as I say, are not for anybody and for everybody. They are for "whosoever will." And anybody who trusts and believes in God through Christ Jesus can have this promise, "When thou (the believer) passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." In this verse there is reference to classic deliverances that were manifested in the history of Israel. This people of Israel had passed through the Red Sea, and through the Jordan river. In the time of Daniel the three Hebrew children came out of the furnace unscathed as it is written.

And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them (Daniel 3:27).

That is the way Daniel reported it. Water and fire are the two natural elements that threaten human beings and Isaiah refers to them in emphasizing the deliverance promised to the remnant, when he wrote:



For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee (Isaiah 43:3).

The latter part of this Scripture is obscure to me since I do not know of any scriptural events to which this might refer. But the meaning of the passage is clear: God is revealing that He did what was involved in bringing the remnant to Himself.

Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life (Isaiah 43:4).

In this passage God is revealing His personal attitude toward the remnant. When He said the remnant was precious in His sight, He is not necessarily implying that there was something unusually superior in the remnant themselves. He could very well be revealing His purpose to so regard them out of His grace and mercy. This is the way God would feel and does feel about anybody who humbly turns to Him in repentance and trusts in His grace.

Because God had chosen to make them His own in a special way, they became highly esteemed; as a peasant girl would become honorable when she becomes the bride of a prince or a king. When God said He loved the remnant, He indicated that He gave something for them. "Loving" them would not imply so much any sentiment that He might have, as it implied what He would do for their welfare and for their happiness. And so we read:

Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him (Isaiah 43:5-7).

In these words the prophet reveals God's plan to bless the remnant. God will call them from everywhere. We are reminded of the Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28:18-20. And I think we would do well to look at those.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matthew 28:18-20).

In these words Christ sends out His witnesses to the ends of the earth to preach the Gospel, teaching all nations and calling unto Himself "whosoever believeth in Him." Some of the flesh descendants of Abraham had been scattered everywhere, and these would be called. Not all would respond, but such as repented and believed would come. But with them would come a multitude of the Gentiles, who hearing the Gospel would embrace it in faith. These would be counted among the children of Abraham; not flesh descendants but spiritual children who walked in his footsteps of faith. They would belong to God because He had created them and formed them. Paul wrote about this in II Corinthians.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (II Corinthians 5:17).

This is the great promise that was true throughout the Old Testament times. God was promising His people and they that believed became the remnant. They were the ones who inherited the promises. God was promising to them that He would send His chosen Servant, whom we know as Christ. They called Him the Messiah. God would send Him. Christ would come and He would do what was necessary to be done, and then He would call the people unto Himself. He would bring them unto God and thus establish God's will and God's way in them and through them to the glory of God.

This is what the Bible is all about and the way in which it presents it. And in these passages which

we have been studying we have been following through to see how the Word of God has sent a special word of assurance to Christ, to the Messiah, telling Him that while He was in His earthly career in human form, limited as He was, Almighty God would keep His eye on Him and watch over Him. God would lead Him and would work through Him to bring the people together to God. Christ Jesus would build them together in the Kingdom of God to the glory of God.

## **Chapter 12 – The Great Invitation (Isaiah 55)**

Scripture reveals God's plan of salvation. With all Scripture in hand we know that salvation is the work of God received by man through faith. Abraham was the pioneer, and is considered to be the father of all who are saved through believing in the grace of God. The revelation of God's plan was presented to Abraham in the form of a promise that was made to him.

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).

Later Abraham was told that the promise would extend to his "seed." This promise was repeated to Isaac and then to Jacob, who was surnamed Israel. Israel developed as a nation cherishing this promise as a tradition.

It seems that later the idea was developed that the nation of Israel was the seed in the promise "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). This concept seems to be held by many among the Jews even today. It seems also that some in our churches to this day hold this same view, that the nation Israel is the seed.

However Paul made it specifically clear in his letter to the Galatians that the seed in Abraham's covenant was Jesus Christ who came as the Messiah, that is as Christ, in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. We read in Galatians:

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

This promise was repeated in a developed form to David when he was promised that one of his seed should sit on the throne forever, and rule over all the kingdoms of men on earth. We read in II Samuel:

I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom . . . I will be his father, and he shall be my son . . . And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever (II Samuel 7:12-16).

This is the way the promise was made to David.

In his letter to the Romans Paul wrote:

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh (Romans 1:3).

Thus Jesus of Nazareth was distinctly named as the seed of Abraham, and the seed of David, fulfilling both the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. He was the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah who would establish the Kingdom of God.

In the Old Testament record of God's dealing with the children of Israel, the will of God was

communicated by prophets, priests and kings. We read in the book of Hebrews:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Not only did God reveal His Word to the prophets for transmission to the people, but also to Moses, as we read:

But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it (Deuteronomy 5:31)

God revealed to Moses the Ten Words which became the Ten Commandments to guide the children of Israel into righteousness as they lived in the land of promise.

At the same time God revealed the pattern of the Tabernacle as a guide to acceptable procedure in worship for the remission of sins, so that God could dwell in the midst of His people to be their God while they were His sons and daughters. Because of their sins they would have been ineligible. It would have been impossible for God to be there, for God is "of purer eyes than to behold sin." So in order for Him to be able to live among His people there needed to be a way of getting rid of sins. And this was pictured for them in the Tabernacle.

Despite all the help that God had arranged to give to the children of Israel, they continued to be wayward in relation to God. The prophets warned Israel that God would not be mocked, and if they persisted in departing from Him in following pagan practices God would destroy them. I am sure even to this day that there will be people who will question whether God would actually destroy anyone. This is an unfortunate error. The Bible gives us plainly to understand from as early as the time of the flood that God will destroy those who do not do what He wants them to do, who do not live as He wants them to live.

In the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah there is a clear picture of the way in which God will destroy those who are evil and willful. We should make no mistake about it, God is not mocked. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." While it is wonderfully true that if the man sows unto the Spirit he shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, it is also just as true that if a man sows to the flesh, he shall of the flesh reap corruption.

In the days of the prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets of the Old Testament, God announced that He would establish a New Covenant. Even as He had sent judges to lead them back to God in the early days after they came into the land, and had given them kings to lead them into His will, so He would send Messiah, His own chosen Servant, to deliver them from their enemies and to bring them into fellowship with Himself. And so in Jeremiah we read:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Joel the prophet pointed out that God would send His own Holy Spirit into His people to activate the New Covenant. Joel wrote:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

This is the way Joel put it.

The plan of God was to provide righteousness for His people through the function of Messiah, who would keep the law perfectly and share His righteousness with all "whosoever believeth in Him." This is one of the great facts of the Gospel. Almighty God wants me to be right. He wants me to be in His will. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil. But I am not able to do the will of God. I have not got it in

myself to be able to walk in His ways. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

If anybody could have done the will of God, one could expect the children of Israel would have been able to do this. With Abraham as their father, and with the fathers Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and other great men leading them on, with their traditions, and their being blessed as they were by the providence of God, and with the help of God in every way, if anybody could have done the will of God those people would have been able to do it. But they could not. They did not. The fact of the matter was that they disappointed God. In fact they betrayed Him. God warned them through the prophets and told them that He would not put up with their disobedience forever.

My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh (Genesis 6:3).

The time came as the prophets had warned them, saying in effect "Now the day has come. The showdown is here. God will now destroy you." But among the people in those days there were some who believed. There were some real believers, and God did not forget about those. In His own way God arranged that He would take care of them. They were weak and sinful as others were, but they trusted in God. Because they trusted in God, God arranged to actually send His Son into this world on their behalf. He would live life perfectly and establish a perfect righteousness acceptable to God. Then in an amazing way God would transfer that righteousness to the believers, who were called "the remnant." God now is able to reckon that righteousness of Christ for, to, upon, anybody "whosoever will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Whosoever will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ will actually inherit the righteousness of Christ by the grace of God.

It is natural to feel that if you get anything good in this world you will have to pay for it. So it works out that not only am I not thankful for what I have, because I think I paid for it; but I am inclined to be proud as I compare myself with others. But this is not how one enters into the blessing of God. The spiritual truth is that I receive from God as a gift eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When God revealed His plan to the prophets in which He would operate with men in a New Covenant, He planned to produce righteousness Himself and give it as a gift to whosoever believed His offer and came to Him. In this way anybody who would, could come. And anybody who came would be dealt with in the grace of God by the power of God. This would all be possible because the Messiah, Christ, would personally perform what was necessary to make the plan work.

This is the grace of God, what God will do in His own way for His own glory. He will actually perform Himself what is necessary for my salvation. What I need to do is to receive, to believe. Because of what the Messiah, what Christ, will do: all men are invited to come as if to a wedding feast. All the believer needs to do is to heed the call and come. If you are invited to a wedding feast you do not expect to pay.

This invitation is spelled out in various aspects in our Scripture portion in Isaiah chapter 55. This chapter opens saying:

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David (Isaiah 55:1-3).

This reminds us of the invitation to the wedding feast in the New Testament. When those who were first bidden did not come, the servants were sent out into the highways and byways and instructed to bring them in.

So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests (Matthew 22:10).

This is the way it reads. There was no appraisal, no examination, no selection to pick out certain people, but an open call "whosoever will may come." This is the Gospel our evangelists preach to this day.

Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people (Isaiah 55:4).

This is the way the prophet said it. This is a direct reference to the Messiah, to Christ, who was sent by Almighty God to bring believers into the will of God.

Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee (Isaiah 55:5).

This seems to point to the coming of the Gentiles who would come in as part of the remnant. Scripture reminds us "they are not all Israel who are of Israel." Even the remnant were not the blood descendants of Abraham. Anybody who believed like Abraham was included in that invitation, and the Gentiles would come in large numbers. Paul commented on the great influx of the Gentiles who came as believers when the Gospel was preached, calling it "the fullness of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:25).

The prophet then issues the call to faith which we recognize as the message of evangelism everywhere. Messiah would make the grace of God available to all men everywhere.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:6-7).

No invitation could be more gracious. I do not know of any possible way in which the door could be swung open more widely, or more graciously. The only prerequisite would be that the soul would want the blessing of God. The believing soul is to seek the Lord, the wicked is to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man is to forsake his thoughts.

It is important to note that the glory of the grace of God revealed here should not blind our eyes to the simple prerequisite: the sinner must want to be saved. You will remember that man at the pool of Bethesda. When Jesus of Nazareth met him, He asked the man a question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" This was a way of saying, "Do you want to be cured?" This will be true for everyone today. Regardless of how gracious the Gospel may sound, nor how wide the invitation may be, we should keep in mind that so far as the individual who responds is concerned, he must be willing to leave where he is, if he is ever going to get to where he is called.

If I am in a certain place, and I receive a call to come somewhere else: "Come on up here": I will need to leave where I am, if I am ever going to get to where I have been called. It is just that simple. The context reads as if the Holy Spirit has anticipated the honest surprise that any sincere person would have that so much could be offered so freely. He reveals the truth that the glory of the grace of God is unspeakable.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The prophet closed this chapter with a description of the joy which will prevail when Christ the Messiah completes His work. Not only will gladness and joy prevail, but the curse will be lifted from the creation.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off (Isaiah 55:12-13).

When the curse was pronounced upon the earth in the early chapter of Genesis, it was written that

the earth was to bring forth thorns and briars. That would be part of the curse. Here Isaiah prophesied "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

There is a glorious future awaiting. The time will come when the whole work of God, the finishing, the completion of the work of Christ, will bring glory to the name of the Father. All the universe will rejoice to see God's plan working out, that His Son should be the firstborn among many brethren. Thus God's people will finally be able to sing a new song. It is when they are delivered from this present carnal world into the eternal spiritual world, by the power of God that raised Christ Jesus from the dead into the newness of life that they will be able to sing the song of the redeemed. Jesus of Nazareth encouraged His disciples saying:

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

## **Sing A New Song – Epilogue**

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace (Isaiah 55:12).

We have been studying the Word of God in Isaiah chapters 40-55 to note the glorious expectation of the remnant as they have been brought to see the Messiah who came from the heaven with His Father's blessing to deliver them from their enemies, and from their own sinfulness, into personal fellowship with God forever. Most public celebrations are memorials, commemorating some great person or some great event now gone into history.

But the Bible bids us to look forward and upward. This is one body of literature that celebrates "a glorious future." Great things have happened, great things have been done, but nothing can compare with what we are looking forward to in the promises of God. Christ Jesus has been here. He lived a perfect life and in God's time He died for us. But we sing "Up from the grave He arose, in mighty triumph o'er His foes." That first resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was quiet in obscurity, but He showed Himself to His disciples. "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20).

Signing can be inspired in various ways. Sometimes the heart is so heavy in grief that the only utterance can be a groan, the origin of the Negro spirituals, "Nobody knows the trouble I have seen, nobody knows but Jesus." Sometimes there is a great desire to arouse spirits to attack the foe; and we sing, "Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war." But the most spontaneous, the strongest, the most lasting origin of singing is in joy, when the heart is full of rejoicing. Singing is strong and uplifting when it comes out of a full heart.

God's people have often known what it is to weep, to endure suffering; but they have learned that God is their "Refuge and Strength." The psalmist put it this way: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

Because God is faithful and will bless His people, they can go about their work in confidence. Harvest will come. We sing "Bringing in the sheaves, bringing in the sheaves; we shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves." This song was doubtless inspired by the word of the psalmist who wrote:

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him (Psalm 126:5-6).

Here let me urge upon any of you that are facing sorrowful circumstances: have you learned what



to do? Do you know about yielding? It will hurt. Oh Yes!! But it will win, if it is done in Him!! Be assured "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." One reason we can be so sure of joy is that God offers Himself to us in our need. Even in Old Testament times the believers had confidence in God. We read:

I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:8-11).

Because of their faith believers could rejoice; and this is true for us who now believe in Christ, even though we must sometimes endure suffering. We know Christ has gone into heaven before us, and that He is praying now for us, and that He shall not fail nor be discouraged. Because this is so, Peter could write:

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory (I Peter 1:8).

Peter wrote especially to souls that were being persecuted. He urged upon them these words:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy (I Peter 4:12- 13).

Joy has always been associated with the presence of the Lord. The mission of Christ Jesus upon the earth brought joy not only in the hearts of men who saw Him, but in heaven itself. Jesus of Nazareth taught very emphatically "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

Sometimes we are inclined to become weary and we even faint in our endeavors to do His will. We need to look unto Jesus. "There is life for a look at the crucified One, there is life at this moment for thee." At a time when the Jews were inclined to weep because they heard the words of the law of God and realized their own weakness and sin, Nehemiah challenged them boldly "Neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Isaiah had encouraged the remnant to expect help as they drew nigh to God. As we have been going through this portion of Scripture and studying as we have these past lessons, we have noticed again and again how Isaiah had encouraged the remnant to expect that God would take care of them. Isaiah said to them, "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). David knew how devastating it was to be separated from God by his sin and he cried: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psalm 51:12).

I have been reviewing Scripture intending to bring to our minds the idea that the evidence that we need to make us rejoice and break forth into singing is the evidence that God is going to undertake on our behalf; and this He will do. It was the prospect of being in the presence of His Father that strengthened Jesus of Nazareth. Scripture records "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2).

Many times when we think of all these different things, we can wonder why did God make the world like this? And I can tell you right now: I do not know. But I will tell you one thing; I trust Him. I feel so confident that He can be depended upon. When I think about that, I wonder to myself: should I think that God does not care? Should I think that God just allows trouble to come because He is busy about something else? Then I tell my heart to hush, to be quiet and wait, and to think about this: no matter what this world is like, God sent His own Son into this world. We read in the book of Hebrews:

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

Then so far as you and I are concerned, we can have this in mind for us. As surely as we live in this world, we will have trouble. Just as surely as we have trouble, we will have sorrow. There are occasions when we could weep. All of that is true, and God knows all of that. But He has arranged in Christ Jesus for our salvation. He has arranged that all these things will work together in His will to do what He wants to do for us. And that is going to be good. Let me remind you again and remind myself again, when we are thinking and wishing we had blessing, wishing that we had health and strength from God, we need to remember such blessing will come in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. By looking up to Him and looking into His face and being aware of Him, we can be strengthened. This is how it will be for us. In the book of Isaiah, especially in this latter part that we have been studying, chapters 40-55, our attention has been drawn to the remnant, those individuals who believed in God. They trusted in God in spite of everything that was happening. In all the troubles they experienced they were looking to God. God promised them that He would send One who would take care of them. And you and I know that that One has come. That is the message of Isaiah 40-55 for you and for me. So far as we are concerned, we can look forward, upward into the presence of God and find that there will be in our hearts a lifting strength from God which will cause us to rejoice in Him and to sing a new song. Hallelujah! Amen.