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## Isaiah 48

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Isaiah 48.

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### Topics.

- O House of Israel who confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right.
- The former things I declared of old then suddenly they came to pass.
- I declared before they came to pass, lest you say, "My idol did them."
- I tried you in the furnace of affliction, for my name is not to be profaned?
- God loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon and prosper.
- If you kept my commandments, your offspring would be like sand.
- Go out from Babylon, proclaim to the earth; God has redeemed Israel.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

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Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster. Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth. Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it:

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy-year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

3. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
4. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22).

**The practical application:** of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

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## PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

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Having some knowledge of the primary focus of the previous chapters helps understand the focus of this chapter and where it fits within the history of Israel. From Isaiah chapter forty up to chapter forty-seven the constant theme and primary focus of Isaiah's visions has been upon:

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- God's love for Israel and the utter foolishness of worshipping idols.
- God using Nebuchadnezzar the secular king of Babylon as His servant (Jer. 25:9) to take Israel into captivity for seventy years.
- The LORD telling Israel their nation will not be annihilated from the face of the earth (by Babylon), because God will bless their descendants.
- The LORD stirring up Cyrus the king of Persia and using him as His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1) who He will equip and take by his right hand to conquer Babylon and set Israel free from their seventy-year Babylonian captivity.
- The people of Israel being set free from their seventy years in captivity and their glorious return to their beloved city Jerusalem and the restoration of their kingdom.

However these amazing prophecies are not limited to Babylon, Cyrus and the restoration of Israel during their generations, but prophetically reach forward to the whole Gospel age from the coming of John the Baptist, the ministry of Jesus and to his return in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

Now in this chapter Israel is told to go out of Babylon and joyfully proclaim to the whole earth that the LORD has redeemed his servant Israel (v20).

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## ISAIAH 48:1-2

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**O House of Israel who Confess God, but Not in Truth or Right.**

- **Isaiah 48:1-2:** Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the LORD and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right. <sup>2</sup>For they call themselves after the holy city, and stay themselves on the God of Israel; the LORD of hosts is his name.

**Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel:** (v1) this is a message to the Jews viewed as being in Babylon (v20) and is most likely spoken to remind them of their origin and of the honour given to them as the descendants of Jacob and to remind them that they are greatly privileged to have the name of Israel and be the LORD'S children.

- Thus, says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. (Isaiah 43:1).

**Who came from the waters of Judah:** (v1) meaning, they descended from the bloodline of their ancestor Judah. The picture is of a fountain with streams of water flowing from it the idea is that Judah was the fountain, (i.e., the origin) of the people who were then exiled into Babylon. However, the focus is not necessarily limited to the tribes of Judah only. This is because the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria had been taken captive by Assyria and the two tribes of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were taken captive by Babylon who later conquered Assyria. During the Babylonian seventy year captivity God like a Master Potter molded the tribes of Judah and of Israel into one united nation so the name Judah in these verses does not necessarily apply to Judah only, but more likely embraces the united nation of Israel especially since Judah is often used as the common name of the nation. The name Judah may also be mentioned here to show honour to the people of the nation (the waters) because it was from Judah (the fountain) that their Messiah was to descend from.

- The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Gen. 49:10).

Perhaps Judah is also mentioned to bring this promise into view and to comfort and give hope to the people that their nation would not be utterly annihilated from the face of the earth or that its power and glory would be lost forever for the LORD and the Scripture promises that their Messiah will surely come. Obviously as individual's they cared for their own lives, but collectively as a nation their greatest fear was the annihilation of their people as a nation from the face of the earth.

**Who swear and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right:** (v1) means that they had the name, but were not true Israelites. They openly claimed to belong to the true God of Israel and not only keep all their sacrifices and proclaimed the word of God, but also strictly adhered to their ceremonial rites and holy days and gave Him glory as the righteous judge of all. They worshipped the LORD and acknowledge Him as their LORD and King, and solemnly promised to serve Him and yield obedience to Him, but not in truth or in righteousness it was all simply lip service. They claimed to be Israelites, but their actual state was one of hypocrisy and unrighteousness. The glory they gave God in their prayers and praises were not according to:

- The will of God and the truth of His word.
- The integrity, sincerity and honesty of their hearts
- Truth and righteousness (i.e., doing what is good and right).

When a person is making an oath and confession to God without these dwelling in the heart, they are not only deceiving themselves, but their confession of faith also counts for nothing. A person may uphold all that God requires of them outwardly, but if their heart is not involved their faith is simply an external faith and not one of spirit and truth, but of word and lip service only and this kind of faith not only offends God, but is an utter abomination before Him.

- Though they say, “As the LORD lives,” yet they swear falsely. (Jer. 5:2).

When a person’s religion and acknowledgment of God lacks truth, justice and righteousness their faith is pretense and because the world perceives the hypocrisy rather than draw people to God, they drive them away. This is one of the main reasons why such a confession of faith is an offence and abomination to God.

- If you swear, “As the LORD lives,” in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory. (Jer. 4:2).

Israel’s faith was based upon a vain confidence and boasting that they were the LORD’S people and had His temple, the law, the promises and the prophets, but they lived and did as they pleased and not according to God’s will or His law.

- Jesus said: God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24).

Meaning those who worship God must worship Him from an honest heart of sincerity that truly desires to live a lifestyle that honours Him and brings a good testimony to His name, in contrast to outwardly upholding all the religious practises and holy days, but inwardly having no thought to how one’s lifestyle reflects on God’s good name, but instead go about doing and living as they please. The faith of such people is a faith of pretence and of hypocrisy and rather than lead to God’s favour and eternal life will bring upon such hypocrites God’s wrath and judgment. A person’s faith and testimony count for nothing unless they are spoken in truth and righteousness. If a person is not sincere in their faith then they are taking the name of the LORD God in vain.

**They stay themselves after the holy city and on the God of Israel:** (v1) means that though they valued themselves as citizens of Jerusalem the city God had chosen to put His name on as the following verses show:

- The LORD said to him (Solomon), "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. (1 Kings 9:3).
- I have chosen and consecrated this house (the house of the LORD) that my name may be there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. (2 Chron. 7:16).
- He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever." (2 Chron. 33:4).

They not only valued themselves as citizens of Jerusalem, but also prided themselves that they had the temple of God the only place of His true worship and presence, but there was no holiness in their lives. They could be likened to those who say they are Christians and pride themselves upon the fact that they have the most magnificent church building with its beautiful coloured windows, high steeples and architectural design, but if those who attend it, live as they please without any thought or regard to how their life reflects upon God and the good name of Jesus their faith is a faith of pretence and hypocrisy.

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## ISAIAH 48:3-4

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### **Former things I Declared of Old then Suddenly they came to Pass.**

- **Isaiah 48:3-4:** "The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth and I announced them; then suddenly I did them and they came to pass. <sup>4</sup>Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass.

Many times God through the prophets warned the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria that they would be overthrown by Assyria and warned the two tribes of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that they would be taken into captivity to Babylon if they didn’t turn from their wicked ways and forsake their idols and pagan gods. Both Judah and Israel rather than

heed the words of the prophets set their hearts diamond hard against them. The LORD knew they would act in this rebellious manner, because they were a stubborn and obstinate people. This is why He was able to say, that the things His prophets proclaimed before they actually came to pass would come to pass, because the Israelites would not humble themselves before the LORD and turn from their wicked ways. Had Israel repented of their ways and turned to the LORD, God would have relented from what He had spoken regarding the Babylonian captivity, but because God knew the people of Israel were such a stubborn people, He knew what He had spoken would come to pass.

Following are just a few verses of the many that highlight the stubborn heart of the people of Israel:

- The LORD said to me (Moses), “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stubborn people.” (Deut. 9:13).
- The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them. (Deut. 31:16).
- I (Moses) know how rebellious and stubborn you are. Behold, even today while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD. How much more after my death! (Deut. 31:27).
- I (Moses) know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way that I have commanded you. And in the days to come evil will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands. (Deut. 31:29).
- They would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. (2 Kings 17:14).
- The house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you (Ezekiel), for they are not willing to listen to me, because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. (Ezekiel 3:7)
- Like a stubborn heifer, Israel is stubborn. (Hosea 4:16).

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## ISAIAH 48:5-8

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### **I declared them before they came, Lest You Say, “My idol did Them.”**

- **Isaiah 48:5-8:** I declared them to you from of old, before they came to pass I announced them to you, lest you should say, 'My idol did them, my carved image and my metal image commanded them.' <sup>6</sup>"You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I announce to you new things, hidden things that you have not known. <sup>7</sup>They are created now, not long ago; before today you have never heard of them, lest you should say, 'Behold, I knew them.' <sup>8</sup>You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel.

**From before birth you were called a rebel:** (v8) this is why God knew that His predictions that Israel would be utterly removed from their land would come to pass. The covenant they entered into with the LORD at Mount Sinai contained some amazing and wonderful blessings that would have abundantly prospered and exalted their nation above all nations of the world had they remained faithful, but it also contained the following curses if they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God:

- The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. (Deut. 28:25).
- A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labours, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. (Deut. 28:33).

- The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. (Deuteronomy 28:36).
- He (the stranger) shall lend to you, and you shall not lend to him. He shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. (Deut. 28:44).
- They (the curses) shall be a sign and a wonder against you and your offspring forever. <sup>47</sup>Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things. (Deut. 28:46).
- You shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything and he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. (Deut. 28:48).
- The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand. (Deuteronomy 28:49).
- They (Israel's enemies) shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the LORD your God has given you. (Deuteronomy 28:52).
- The LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. (Deut. 28:64).

Assyria and Babylon brought these curses to pass, Assyria overthrew the ten tribes of Israel and took them captive and Babylon invaded the land of Judah and Jerusalem and took the people of Judah into captivity for seventy years. Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated. Many of the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist, but the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

**I announce to you, new things, hidden things that you have not known:** (v6) in this context the new and hidden thing that the LORD declared and is about to come to pass that they could not possibly comprehend refers to something that is going to benefit Israel. We know this because the reason the LORD announced it before it came to pass is because He did not want them to credit their gods and idols for bringing it to pass. The New thing refers to Cyrus the king of Persia who God used as His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1) to bring the Empire of Babylon to ruin and set the people of Israel free from the bondage and captivity of Babylon.

The following verses of the prophet Isaiah show that God not only called Cyrus (the secular king of Persia) His anointed shepherd and called him by name, but also show that God said He would equip Cyrus and take him by the right hand and go before him. They picture God holding Cyrus by the right hand and opening all doors that no man can shut while Cyrus the king of Persia subdues all nations.

- Thus says the LORD to *his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped*, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed. (Isaiah 45:1).
- I (*the LORD*) will go before you (*Cyrus king of Persia*) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, <sup>3</sup>I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, *who call you (Cyrus) by your name*. <sup>4</sup>For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, *I call you by your name, I name you*, though you do not know me. (Isaiah 45:2-3).

- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; *I equip you (Cyrus) though you do not know me,* <sup>6</sup>that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me; I am the LORD, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6).
- Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabceans, *men of stature, shall come over to you (Cyrus)* and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: '*Surely God is in you,* and there is no other, no god besides him.' (Isaiah 45:14).

God used Cyrus King of Persia as His anointed shepherd to set His people free. Cyrus after conquering the mighty Empire of Babylon gave Israel written permission to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God. This is a new thing and something that Israel could never have comprehended prior to it coming to pass. Never before in Israel's history had God used a king who was not born of the nation of Israel and a worshipper of other gods in such a unique manner to save His people and set them free; to give them written permission to rebuild the temple of God and return to them all the scared vessels Babylon had pillaged from the temple.

Added to this Cyrus publicly proclaimed that the God of Israel was the true God. God used Cyrus the king of Media Persia in a most unique manner, by the kindness and favour he showed toward God's people Israel multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations were able to return to Jerusalem and to their land with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a golden time of prosperity and peace followed.

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## ISAIAH 48:9-10

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### **I tried you in Affliction, for My Name is Not to Be Profaned?**

- **Isaiah 48:9-10:** "For my name's sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. <sup>10</sup>Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction <sup>11</sup>For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

God delays His anger means that He will not totally cut Israel off, but instead He will refine them as silver and gold is purified in a furnace of fire. Judah and Israel went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. While in captivity God molded them like a master potter molds a beautiful clay jar. They went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1) gave permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel back to their beloved city as one nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to pagan gods again). Sadly, Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory:

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

**For my own sake, I have tried you in the furnace of affliction:** (v11) the furnace of fire in this context refers to Israel's seventy years captivity. The reason God afflicted them was because by their corrupt and wicked behaviour they were bring dishonour to His name and by doing so giving the Gentile nations reason to mock and scorn God rather than look to Him as a God of mercy, love and justice. The reason God judged Israel was because by their ongoing wickedness they profaned, blasphemed and

dishonoured His Name and by their greed oppressed the poor and needy. The two greatest sins before God is to act, speak or behave in a manner that brings dishonour to God's good name (i.e., a loving, protective Father full of mercy and grace) and to physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually deliberately do harm to another human.

**The principal of discipline:** Israel were God's chosen people called to be witness of the goodness and Holiness of the LORD to the Gentile nations and as such the LORD could not allow them to continually live a wicked and corrupt lifestyle that dishonors His name without disciplining them, otherwise to the outside world He would appear as a God that approves of sin. This principal is not limited to Israel only, but applies to all who belong to the LORD'S Kingdom they will receive stronger discipline to show that the LORD is Holy. That is why the LORD says, Israel has received double punishment for their sins, even a natural father corrects a rebellious child to protect his own reputation and name.

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## ISAIAH 48:12-15

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### **God Loves Him; He shall Perform his Purpose on Babylon.**

- **Isaiah 48:12-15:** "Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last. <sup>13</sup>My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together. <sup>14</sup>"Assemble, all of you, and listen! who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans. <sup>15</sup>I, even I, have spoken and called him; I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way.

The LORD calls Israel to gather together and declares to them that He is the eternal God who created the heavens and the earth, in contrast to the idols that they believed in, that could not see, hear, speak or move.

**Who among them has declared these things?** (v14) can refer to the following two things:

1. Who amongst their idols can declare that they are the first and the last and that they are an eternal god and that they laid the foundation of the earth and spread out the heavens?
2. Who amongst their idols can declare future thing that have come to pass?

The one the LORD loves and who shall perform the LORD'S purpose on Babylon of course refers to Cyrus the king of Persia. At this time God's purpose for Babylon was to bring it to utter ruin and set His people Israel free. The LORD used Cyrus the king of Persia to bring both of these to pass. He not only took Cyrus His anointed shepherd by the right hand and equipped Him to bring the Empire of Babylon to ruin, but also used him to set God's people free.

(Isaiah 45:1) (Isaiah 45:2-3) (Isaiah 45:5-6) (Isaiah 45:14).

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## ISAIAH 48:16-19

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### **If you Kept my Commandments, Your Offspring would be like Sand.**

- **Isaiah 48:16-19:** Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there." And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit. <sup>17</sup>Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go. <sup>18</sup>Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; <sup>19</sup>your offspring would have been like the sand, and your descendants like its grains; their name would never be cut off or destroyed from before me."

Isaiah tells Israel that from the beginning of his prophetic calling and ministry the LORD, Israel's Redeemer, the Holy One has by His Spirit been openly and publicly telling them the way that they should go and that if they did obey God's word and heed His commandments peace would have covered their land like a fresh flowing river that brings life to barren deserts and they would have been counted by God as righteous. This means that God would have not only prospered their farms, livestock, vineyards, orchards and multiplied their offspring as the sand of the seashore, but also prospered all that they put their hand to and made them the head of the nations and not the tail. But they paid no attention to Isaiah's warnings and instead set their hearts diamond hard against the word of the LORD, so instead of being abundantly blessed God allowed Assyria to lay the land of the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria waste and take the people captive. He then used Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon as His servant, (Jer. 25:9) and his armies to lay the land of Judah waste and destroy the city of Jerusalem and take the people captive so that their land, their cities and Jerusalem was stripped bare of its people and of their livestock and crops for seventy years.

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## ISAIAH 48:20-22

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### **Go out from Babylon, proclaim; God has Redeemed Israel.**

- **Isaiah 48:20-22:** Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!" <sup>21</sup>They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and the water gushed out. <sup>22</sup>"There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."

**Chaldea:** the people of Chaldea are called Chaldeans their history began in the era of Nimrod the king of Assyria. In order to bring all people under one government he built Babel in the land of Shinar to increase his own empire. At this time Assyria gradually became the head of the Chaldean people who were scattered in the fields and deserts and lived in tents. However over time the Chaldeans built their city, its towers and palaces and established power and dominion over their neighbours until they eventually grew to be the greatest of all the monarchies upon earth and from that time they became commonly referred to as Babylon (or Babylonians) a dynasty in the country called Iraq today.

The following verses show that the names Babylon and Chaldea are often interchanged and signify the same kingdom and people:

- The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans. (Isaiah 48:14).
- Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it. (Isaiah 48:20).
- The word that the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. (Jer. 50:1).
- I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the evil that they have done in Zion, declares the LORD. (Jer. 51:24).
- I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare. And I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, and he shall die there. (Ezekiel 12:13).

Isaiah in this prophetic vision by the inspiration of God's Spirit foresees the LORD calling His people to joyfully go out from Babylon and openly and publicly declare with a shout to the end of the earth the following three things:

- The LORD redeemed his people Israel.

- God did great miracles to save and protect them.
- The wicked will never have peace.

**They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts:** (v21) this verse and the following one are allusions to the fact that God caused the waters to flow out of the rock that Moses smote in the wilderness spoken of in the following verses:

- Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink. And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exod. 17:6).
- Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. (Num. 20:11).
- He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. (Psalm 78:15).
- He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. (Psalm 105:41).

There is no record that any such event took place during Israel's return from their seventy-year Babylonian captivity. Neither the Bible nor history makes any mention of God splitting a rock and making rivers of water flow from it for the people to drink from as they marched from Babylon through the desert to Jerusalem. The mention of this miraculous wonder is most likely mentioned to give those fleeing from Babylon security that they will be protected and comfort that they will be kept safe on their travel to Jerusalem as the LORD kept them safe during their wilderness journey.

These events would have been very well known to them so it is also very likely they were a part of the lyrics of a triumphant song that they joyfully sang as they returned to their own land celebrating God's mercy, favour and blessing toward them and signifying that it was similar to the goodness He showed to their fathers when He led them to the land of promise. Isaiah by mentioning these miraculous events and wonders is showing them that it will be as easy for the LORD to deliver them from Babylon as he delivered their fathers out of Egypt.

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## CHRIST THE ROCK

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So far, the study has mostly looked upon the prophetic message of Isaiah with a literal view in mind. In contrast to this the preceding notes are focused upon the beautiful spiritual message contained in the following prophetic words of Isaiah:

- They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and the water gushed out. (Isaiah 48:21).

The people of Israel did not thirst as the LORD led them through the dry and barren wilderness and He promised them they would not thirst as they went out from Babylon and travelled through the deserts to their beloved city Jerusalem. The following verses show that Babylon in the book of Revelation is a symbol of the false global religious system and the corrupt system of the world.

- A mighty angel called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! <sup>3</sup>For all nations and kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living." <sup>4</sup>Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; (Rev. 18:2-4).

Here the LORD'S angel is calling God's people to come out of Babylon and not be partakers of her sins. The idea is that though we are in the world we are not to be part of it. This does not mean that we should set up communes and isolate ourselves from the world (as some do), but that we are not to:

- Give our hearts and passions over to the ways of the world's system of financial greed and never be content with what we have, but forever be wanting more.
- Give all our time to chase after worldly riches and material possessions and give no time to God or His service.
- Use lies and deception to further our ambitions and goals as much of the world does (especially those in high places of government and politics).
- Oppress others for our own financial gain, profit and advantage.
- Twist and distort the Scriptures so that they appeal to pride, self and ego so we will have bigger congregations, greater offerings and global fame.
- Use the Scriptures to place guilt upon people to entice and manipulate them to give financially so we can indulge ourselves in a luxurious lifestyle.
- Live a lifestyle of immorality dishonesty, wickedness and corruption etc.

Summing it all up, it means that those who confess to belong to the Kingdom of God should do all that they can to live a lifestyle that brings honour to God and a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and avoid those things that don't.

**The Rock that followed them:** the LORD did not only redeem His people and provide for their needs, but also guided them as they travelled through the dry and barren wilderness to their own land.

- All (the fathers of Israel) drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:4).

This means that the faithful of the Old Testament, by faith held their promised Messiah the Christ to come before them and set their hearts upon him and not the things of this world. It means that they trusted in him to bring them into their promised inheritance in the same way that Christians today set their hearts upon him and trust in him to bring them safely to their promised inheritance in eternal glory.

Jesus said to the woman at the well:

- If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink," you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. (John 4:10).
- Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever, the water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. (John 4:14).

The following verses show that water is often used to signify abundant joy and spiritual refreshment:

- The lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy, for waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. (Isaiah 35:6).
- They shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. (Isa. 49:10).

As the apostles of Christ travelled through the spiritually barren Gentile world, proclaiming redemption and salvation by Christ they were supplied with all that was needed and those who drank of the living waters of the Gospel of redemption in Christ never spiritually thirsted again, but found that the water that the Lord gave them to drink became a spring of water welling up in their hearts to eternal life as God promised. (John 4:14) (Isaiah 49:10). As the faithful travel through the wilderness of this world (symbolised by Babylon) they are supplied and refreshed with living water that flows out of the fountain and fullness of God's grace in Christ. The rock

was a type of Christ, from whom the living waters of grace flow, to support, supply, comfort, and refresh the faithful as they journey through this world patiently awaiting for the glorious day when Christ returns and they are gathered together to be with him in eternal glory and everlasting happiness. In the book of Psalms, it is written:

- God split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. (Psalm 78:15).

Symbolically and spiritually the abundant waters springing and gushing up from the deep signifies the abundance of grace which is received from Christ, not only at the pardon of sins and entry into the global family of Christ, but also in a believers ongoing communion with God. This daily out pouring of grace comes to all the faithful in Christ the Rock their Redeemer and Saviour. It is by his love, his righteousness (not their own) and his grace that he will safely keep them as they travel through this corrupt and fallen world and at the end crown them with the crown of immortality and eternal life.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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