

ISAIAH LESSON 47
Promises, a Prayer and Predictions
(Isaiah 51:1-16)

Isaiah 51:1-16 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

Blessings in Store for God's People^a

51 "Hearken to me, you who pursue deliverance,
you who seek the Lord^b;
look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were digged.^c
² Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for when he was but one I called him,
and I blessed him and made him many.^d
³ For the Lord will comfort Zion;
he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.^e
⁴ "Listen to me, my people,
and give ear to me, my nation;
for a law will go forth from me,
and my justice for a light to the peoples.^f
⁵ My deliverance draws near speedily,
my salvation has gone forth,
and my arms will rule the peoples;
the coastlands wait for me,
and for my arm they hope.^g
⁶ Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die like gnats;^[a]
but my salvation will be for ever,
and my deliverance will never be ended.^h
⁷ "Hearken to me, you who know righteousness,
the people in whose heart is my law;
fear not the reproach of men,
and be not dismayed at their revilings.ⁱ
⁸ For the moth will eat them up like a garment,
and the worm will eat them like wool;
but my deliverance will be for ever,
and my salvation to all generations."^j
⁹ Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of the Lord;

awake, as in days of old,
 the generations of long ago.
 Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces,
 that didst pierce the dragon?^k
¹⁰ Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea,
 the waters of the great deep;
 that didst make the depths of the sea a way
 for the redeemed to pass over?^l
¹¹ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
 and come to Zion with singing;
 everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
 they shall obtain joy and gladness,
 and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.^m
¹² “I, I am he that comforts you;
 who are you that you are afraid of man who dies,
 of the son of man who is made like grass,ⁿ
¹³ and have forgotten the Lord, your Maker,
 who stretched out the heavens
 and laid the foundations of the earth,
 and fear continually all the day
 because of the fury of the oppressor,
 when he sets himself to destroy?
 And where is the fury of the oppressor?^o
¹⁴ He who is bowed down shall speedily be released;
 he shall not die and go down to the Pit,
 neither shall his bread fail.^p
¹⁵ For I am the Lord your God^q,
 who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
 the Lord of hosts^r is his name.^s
¹⁶ And I have put my words in your mouth,
 and hid you in the shadow of my hand,
 stretching out^[b] the heavens
 and laying the foundations of the earth,
 and saying to Zion, ‘You are my people.’”^t

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

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^a **Blessings in Store for God’s People.** The first verse in this chapter begins a long poem, or series of poems, regarding the restoration of Zion which ends at Is 52:12. It is linked together by the exhortations to “listen” and the repetition of the phrase, “Awake, awake” (Is 51:9, 51:17, 52:1). In Chapter 51 God again reminds His people of His blessings in the past, particularly the blessing to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3; Ezk 33:24) and assures them of His care for them and that He has the power to redeem them. They perhaps need this reassurance because they are slow of heart (Lk 24:25). This is true even of those who seek the Lord (v. 1), those He calls His people (v. 4), and those who know righteousness (v. 7). Four times in this chapter He calls upon his people to

listen (vs. 1, 4, 7 and 21). Similar calls to listen or pay attention are also a prominent feature of the Chapters that precede this one (Is 41:1, 42:18, 44:7, 46:3, 46:12, 48:1, 48:12, 49:1). The blessings on Abraham are the origin of the claim of the Jewish people to the Land of Zion. There are three main characters, who speak or are spoken to, in this Chapter, God, the Remnant (who seek the Lord and know righteousness), and the Servant who, we learn, is also called the Arm of the Lord. Chapters 40-66 of Isaiah, while showing a great deal of textual and stylistic consistency with the first 39 chapters, are radically different in that they deal with the Babylonian Captivity rather than the ministry of Isaiah to Judah, and to some extent the Northern Kingdom of Israel, during Isaiah's lifetime which were the background of the first 39 chapters. While the subject of these later chapters appears, on the surface, to be return from exile in Babylon, it must be seen as also speaking about the Messianic Kingdom to come. For example, verse 14 implies that the condition of the Jews in exile was terrible, likened to a prison or pit in which there is little food. In fact, the Jews in Babylon led a fairly prosperous existence with many in high positions with the government. There appeared to be no lack of good food once the issue of eating Kosher was resolved (Dn 1:8-16). In Chapters 40-49 the Servant is most often Cyrus II who conquered Babylon and authorized the return to Babylon. In Chapters 50-55 the concern shifts to the spiritual salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. The Servant is more often identified as the unique individual to whom we were introduced before (Is 7:14-15, 9:2-7, 11:1-16, 40:1-5, 40:9-11, 42:1-9, 49:1-13, 50:4-11) with a special mission to bring restoration to the Jews and redemption to the nations. Verses 1-16 of Chapter 51 contain three **promises** (vs. 1-8) by God, a **prayer** (vs. 9-11) by the Remnant, and a **prediction** (vs 12-15) by God, with the last verse (16) being, in effect, a commission to the Servant Arm of God. God's promises are a promise of **restoration** (vs. 1-3) a promise of **salvation** (vs. 4-6) and a promise of **protection** (vs. 7-8).

^b **Lord** - *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah* (יהוה, YHWH), written without vowel markings, unpronounced by Jews and referred to as the Tetragrammaton. See Note in the Introduction to this Study. **YHWH** appears here and in verses 3 (twice), 9, 11 and 13.

^c (1) In contrast to those who forgot God (Is 17:10-11) and trusted in themselves (tried to create their own light) in Is 50:11 (Rm 10:3), and whose end will be pain and suffering, God calls to those who are honestly seeking Him (Is 50:10, 55:6, 65:10; Gn 12:1-4; Php 3:13-14) and the guidance toward **righteousness** (צדק, *tsedek*, also sometimes translated as Godliness or deliverance) and asks them to listen (Is 46:3) and reminds them that God provides (Is 45:19, 55:2-3; Dt 16:20; Ps 24:6, 105:3-4; Am 5:6). Seeking God's righteousness involves seeking a relationship with God (Is 51:7; Rm 9:30-32, 14:19; Eph 2:11-12), and from that relationship we learn to behave in ways that benefit us and glorify God (Is 63:8; Dt 7:12-13; Ps 94:15; Pr 15:9, 21:21; Zep 2:3; Mt 5:6, 6:33; 1Tm 6:11; 2Tm 2:22; Heb 12:14). He reminds them, by referring to their ancestors Abraham and Sarah, that God brought their people into existence and sustained them through the ages and asks them to be mindful of that history (Is 46:3-4). It is true, however, that one can seek God earnestly, but not receive Him, because that one seeks God by works rather than faith (Rm 9:30-32). The **rock** (צור, *tsuwr*) may be a play on words with *tsedek* because of the similarity of the Hebrew letters indicating that in some sense the Jews were created to fulfil God's righteousness. The **quarry** or pit, literally "the hole (מקבת, *maqebeth*) of the pit (רוב, *bowr*)" is generally thought to correspond to the ancestry (Abraham and Sarah in the next verse and the Patriarchs generally) and history of the Jewish people that showed God's past help for them in time of trouble. This ancestry, in the faithfulness of Abraham, can be seen as a solid rock, a foundation upon which to build the nation. The LXX reads, "Hearken to Me, you that follow after righteousness, and seek the Lord; look to the solid rock, which you have hewn, and to the hole of the pit which you have dug." The LXX phrasing, "you have hewed" and "you have dug" do not fit the context in which verse 2 refers to the founders of the Jewish people, Abraham and Sarah. The promise of restoration in verses 1-3 is in the poetic form of first being asked to listen, then being reminded of God's mighty acts of salvation, and finally praise for God. When we pray it is good to praise God and remind ourselves (He does not need reminding) of God's blessings to us in the past. This will bring us confidence of God's Providence for the future, and that the passing troubles of this world are nothing compared to our eternal salvation.

^d (2) God called (Is 48:12) Abraham to take his wife Sarah, leave his home and people (which were located in Ur which is near the site of Babylon), and travel to what was then a far-away and alien place promising to make him a great nation (Gn 12:1-4, 15:1-6). That is, even though Abraham and Sarah were old, beyond normal child bearing age (Gn 18:11-13), likened to sterile rocks in the prior verse (Mt 3:9), Abraham was promised many descendants and a wide land in which to live (Gn 13:14-17, 22:17; Ezk 33:24). God's "blessing" on Abraham likely carries the implication of potency or reproductive power (Gn 1:28, 24:1, 24:35; Dt 1:10; Jsh 24:3). 1QIsa has, rather than blessed, a phrase that can be rendered "made him fruitful" emphasizing that the blessing refers to fertility. By faith (Rm 4:16-24; Gal 3:9-14; Heb 11:8-12), Abraham, and Sarah, followed God's call and their descendants were the Jewish people who are now asked to remember Abraham and Sarah their ancestors. It may be that by reminding God's people of this story, He is also reminding them of the faith of Abraham that was accounted to him as righteousness (Gn 15:4-6; Ac 7:5; Rm 4:1-25; Gal 3:6; Heb 11:8-12; Jas 2:23). God called Abraham, and unlike his descendants among Isaiah's contemporaries, he responded to God's call (Neh 9:7-8). God was also reminding His people that though they appeared weak and few at the time, God had called them (Is 41:8) and had the power to make them a great nation again (Is 29:22, 60:22). Three of Israel's matriarchs appeared for a time to be barren – Sarah (Gn 11:30), Rebekah (Gn 17:6, 17:15-17, 25:21) and Rachel (Gn 29:31) – emphasizing the power of God to use the weak or insignificant for His purposes and fulfill His promises. These promises will ultimately apply to the nations, the gentiles who are not descendants of Abraham (Is 63:16). The *Targum of Isaiah* has God calling Abraham and bringing him into His service. The LXX has, "Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah

who bore you; for he was alone when I called him, and blessed him, and loved him, and multiplied him” adding that God loved Abraham.

^e (3) Zion, that is Jerusalem and the Land, is addressed as if it were a person (Is 60:14) to be consoled and reassured (Is 40:1-2, 51:12, 54:6-8, 66:10-14; Ps 85:8, 102:13-14; Jr 31:25; 2Co 1:3-4). Zion is promised not only a restoration to its previous state (Is 44:26, 49:8; Ps 51:18), but even more, that it would become like the Lord’s Garden in Eden (Is 4:2, 32:15, 35:1-2, 35:7-10, 41:16-19, 43:19, 61:1-4, 65:21-22; Gn 2:8-17, 13:10; Ezk 28:13, 31:8-10, 36:35; Jl 2:3; Rv 2:7; Rv 21-22). This event becomes the reversal of the Curse of Gn 3 as even the Land is restored. It also reverses the effects of Israel’s sin which resulted in the abandonment of the Land and its conversion into wilderness (Is 5:6, 35:1, 35:6, 49:8; Jr 33:11-13). Zion is also promised that her people will rejoice and be grateful to the Lord (Is 12:1, 25:9, 41:16, 49:13, 52:9, 65:18; Jr 16:9, 17:26, 30:19, 31:12-14; Zep 3:14-20; 1Pt 1:8; Rv 19:1-7).

^f (4) God calls His people to **listen** (קָשַׁב, *qashab*) and **give ear** (אָזַן, *'azan*) or pay attention because He is going to send a **law**, decree, instruction or teaching (תּוֹרָה, *torah*) by which His righteousness (מִשְׁפָּט, *mishpat*; Is 3:15) will be a light (אוֹר, *owr*) to the peoples (עַמִּים, *amiym*, a plural form indicating that the light will go out to the gentiles, Is 2:3-4, 9:2, 49:6; Ps 78:1; Pr 6:23; Mi 4:2; Lk 2:32). Redemption for the nation and repentant individuals will not come through human efforts (Is 26:2, 26:8, 26:18, 33:22), but will come through God’s justice and righteousness (Is 1:27, 26:2). Some commentators have suggested that the decree or teaching is the Servant, though that does not appear in the text and must be implied by the similarity of its purpose to the mission of the Servant (Is 42:1-6, 63:8; Ps 147:20; Mt 12:18-20; Jn 16:8-11; Rm 8:2-4) as described in, particularly, the first two Servant Songs. The Servant will be the light to the nations (Is 49:6, 51:4). He will establish His *Torah* and bring salvation (Is 42:1-4, 51:4-6; 1Co 9:21). It is perhaps better seen as God’s statement that by the restoration of God’s people and the Land (Is 64:9; Ex 6:7, 19:6, 33:13; Dt 18:18; Ps 33:12, 50:7, 106:5; 1Pt 2:9), and the establishment of His justice there, the peoples of the earth would come to see and acknowledge God. This does not exclude the Servant’s role, but does not go beyond what is in the text of this verse. God’s Laws or Teachings are, in some sense, part of God’s character, and thus inherent in the structure of the universe itself. That is, rather than arbitrary “rules” imposed by God, they are reflections of how the universe operates and how mankind should behave for its own good. In the last days, God will send out His Teaching (תּוֹרָה, *torah*), His Salvation (יְשָׁע, *yeshah`*, see verse 5) and His Justice (מִשְׁפָּט, *mishpat*).

^g (5) God says he will send His **deliverance** (צִדְקָה, *tsedeq*, also justice or righteousness) and **salvation** (יְשָׁע, *yeshah`*, also deliverance, rescue or safety) quickly (Is 46:13, 54:17, 56:1, 63:1; Dt 30:14; Ps 85:9, 96:13, 98:9; Mt 3:2). He promises to judge all the nations of the earth (Is 2:2-3, 33:22; Ps 110:6; Jl 3:12; Zep 2:11; Mt 25:31-46; Jn 5:22-23; Ac 17:31; Rm 2:16; 2Co 5:10) with His Arm, something for which they are waiting (Rm 8:22-24). That the time for God’s judgment is drawing near could refer to the coming liberation of God’s people from Babylon and the gathering of God’s people from the corners of the Earth (Is 11:11; Ps 37:9, 50:4-6), though that would not fit with the idea of the islands or coastlands (Is 24:25), that is, the gentile nations, waiting and hoping for this (Is 12:2, 35:4, 42:4, 49:1; Ps 67:4; Rm 10:17-18). It is perhaps better understood as the nations waiting and hoping for the liberation that knowledge of the Messiah will bring or for the final judgment when the Messiah returns, though as with verse 4, this must be implied from the overall context. In the Hebrew Scriptures, God’s arm typically refers to God’s power, though elsewhere, as here, Isaiah refers to the Servant as God’s **arm** (עֲזָרָה, *zeraa*, Is 40:10, 52:10, 59:16, 60:9, 63:5; 1Sm 2:10; Ps 98:1; Mt 28:18) in whom the gentile nations will wait or **hope** (יָחַל, *yachal*, Is 26:4, 33:2, 42:4). The gentile nations may groan for liberation and justice without knowing its source, or how it will come to pass (Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47; Rm 1:16-17, 10:6-10, 15:9-12). This verse indicates that God will be revealing His arm to carry out His judgment on the nations and to bring salvation and righteousness (Gn 49:10). It is not clear why Arm is plural the first time it appears in this verse. Some have suggested the reason is to intensify or draw attention to the word. The LXX reads, “My righteousness speedily draws near, and My salvation shall go forth as light, and on My arm shall the Gentiles trust; the isles shall wait for Me, and on My arm shall they trust.” In the *Targum of Isaiah*, God judges the nations by the full strength of his mighty arm.

^h (6) Is 12:2, 13:13, 34:4, 40:26, 45:17, 50:9, 51:8, 54:10, 56:1, 65:17; Dt 4:19; Ps 8:3-4, 37:20, 89:33, 102:25-28, 103:17, 119:89; Dn 9:24; Ezk 47:1-5; Mt 24:25, 24:35; Lk 21:33; Jn 3:15-16, 5:24, 10:27-29; 2Th 2:16; 2Tm 2:10; Heb 1:10-12, 5:9, 9:12-15; 2Pt 3:7-12; Rv 6:12-14, 20:11, 21:1. The heavens will **vanish** (חָלַח, *malach*) **like smoke** (עָשָׁן, *'ashan*) and the Earth will become old or **wear out** (בָּלָה, *balah*) **like a garment** (בִּגְדָה, *beged*), but God’s salvation remains. The verbs in the sentence are in the perfect tense indicating the certainty of their coming to pass. Salvation (יְשׁוּעָה, *yeshuah*, or Jesus) in the Hebrew has the connotation of being plucked from calamity or of the breaking of a siege. Jewish interpreters see this text as only applying to the liberation from Babylon and the return to the Land that followed, but that seems unlikely in view of the destruction of sky and earth together, and the permanence of the vindication, salvation or deliverance that will come (Is 40:6-8). While the physical world we know is transitory, the Word of the Lord will not pass away (Mt 5:18, 24:35). God asks His people to look at the sky, and then down at the earth beneath their feet, both of which appear permanent, and tells them that while these things will ultimately pass away, God’s justice and salvation will remain. Though human beings remain mortal, God’s promises will endure and come to pass. IQIsa omits the vanishing of the heavens and the wearing out of the earth like a garment. Instead, the reason for looking up to the heavens and down to the earth was to focus on the God who created them. The LXX says, “Lift up your

eyes to the sky, and look on the earth beneath; for the sky was darkened like smoke, and the earth shall grow old like a garment, and the inhabitants shall die in like manner; but My righteousness shall not fail. In 1Co 13, the Apostle Paul states that faith, hope and love are all important, but the greatest of these is love because, unlike the others, love never ends. In heaven we no longer will need faith, and our hope will have been fulfilled, leaving only love.

ⁱ (7) Is 25:8, 41:11-14, 42:18, 43:22-24, 50:7, 51:1, 54:4; Dt 6:6; Ps 37:31, 40:8, 119:11, 119:39; Jr 1:17, 31:33-34; Ezk 2:6; Mt 5:11, 10:28; Lk 6:22, 12:4-5; Ac 5:41; 2Co 3:3; Php 3:8-10; Ti 2:11-12; Heb 10:16; 1Pt 4:4, 4:14. God is speaking here to those who know His teaching, whose law is written on their hearts (___), who in this context are likely either the Jewish people generally or more likely the faithful Remnant (___). These people therefore know what God's justice is. Because the law is written on their hearts, it is likely that this involves not only knowing, but also doing, the things taught by God, including upright behavior, fair treatment of others, and faithfulness in all they do. Like the Servant, they will be subject to suffering and humiliation from those who do not know and follow God's righteousness. But like the Servant, they need not be discouraged by this.

^j (8) Is 14:11, 45:17, 46:12-13, 48:1-5, 50:9-11, 51:6, 66:24; Ps 102:27-28; Jb 4:19, 13:28; Hos 5:12; Lk 1:50; Jas 5:2. This, and the prior verse, are God's promise of protection to His people. Those who oppress God's people will pass away in their time, but the vindication, deliverance or salvation (___, ___) of the Lord will endure forever. There will never be a time when God cannot deliver His people because it is available to all generations.

^k (9) Is 27:1, 30:7, 30:30, 33:2, 40:10, 40:31, 51:17, 52:1, 52:10, 53:1, 59:16-17, 62:8; Gn 18:14; Ex 6:6, 14:24-28, 15:7, 15:16; Dt 4:34, 32:7; Jdg 5:12, 6:13; Neh 9:7-15; Jb 3:8, 7:12, 9:13, 26:12, 38:8, 41:1-34; Ps 7:6, 21:13, 44:1, 44:23, 59:4, 65:6, 68:30, 74:12-17, 78:65, 87:4, 89:10-11, 93:1, 98:1, 104:26; Ezk 29:3; Hab 2:19, 3:13; Lk 1:51; Jn 12:38; Rv 11:17, 12:9. It appears that the speaker shifts for verses 9-11 from God to God's faithful people, that is the Remnant, to whom God, having left them in Babylon for 70 years, appears to be asleep. The people pray to God asking Him to quickly use His mighty arm, a personified symbol of God's power, for their vindication (1Co 4:5, 16:22; Jas 5:8-9; Rv 6:9-11, 22:12, 22:17, 22:20-21). The people remind God of His prior mighty acts in hewing, chopping or **cutting** (**חָצַב**, *chatsab*) **Rahab** (**רַהַב**, *Rahab*, a proper name which could also be translated as the "arrogant one") to pieces and wounding or **piercing** (**חָלַל**, *chahal*) the **dragon** (**תַּנִּינ**, *tanniyn*, also translated serpent, sea monster, Leviathan), and ask for liberation and a return to Zion. 1QIsa has (**מַחֲטֵא**, *makhats*, "smash") for **חָצַב**, "cut". This also points back to God's work during the Exodus (Ex 14-15) because of Rahab's identification with Egypt (Is 30:7, 51:9; Ps 87:4, 89:11-13; Jb 26:12; Ezk 29:3). The *Targum of Isaiah* specifically refers to "Pharaoh and his armies" as being "as strong as the dragon." These are the words of a faithful people finally accepting God's plan, even though, in the immediate context, it involves further waiting and the actions of Cyrus, a foreign King, to whom they would become subject (___) rather than the reestablishment of the Davidic Kingdom for which they had hoped. In a sense it is an answer to God's complaint against His people that they would not accept His plan for them (___). The verse identifies the Arm of the Lord as the individual acting to liberate God's people during the Exodus and thus cannot be the Jews generally or the Remnant since they are the object of the liberation. The LXX does not mention Rahab or a Sea Monster. The imperative to awake in the LXX is directed to Jerusalem or Israel in her state of affliction. This situation would change, with Jerusalem arousing herself and clothing her "arm" with strength. The LXX reads, "Awake, awake, O Jerusalem, and put on the strength of your arm; awake as in the early time, as the ancient generation." This creates a problem, however, because Jerusalem was not involved in the parting of the sea described in following verse.

^l (10) Is 11:15-16, 40:3, 42:15, 43:14-16, 50:2, 63:9-13; Ex 10, 14:5-31, 15:5-8, 15:13; Jsh 3:16; Ps 74:13, 106:9-10; Jb 36:30; Zec 10:11; Rv 16:12. This is a clear reference to the Exodus story and the actions of God's mighty arm. Some exclude the Servant, the Messiah, from being the "mighty arm" by reason of the reference to His actions in the Exodus, or to defeating the monsters in the previous verse. Christians interpret those incidents as showing that the Second Person of the Trinity, the Servant or Messiah, was present and active in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Great Deep is a reference to the primordial chaos (Gn 1:2, 7:11, 49:25; Jb 28:14; Ps 36:7; Jnh 2:4). The mythology of many of the nations surrounding Israel spoke of the creation being the victory of the creator-god over the Monsters of chaos, called Rahab (Jb 9:13, 26:12; Ps 89:10), the Dragon (Tannin or Leviathan) (Is 27:1; Jb 7:12; Ps 74:14; Ezk 29:3), and the Abyss (*Tehom*, or *Tiamath* of Babylonian mythology) (Gn 1:2; Ps 104:7-9; Hab 3:10.) By the time of Isaiah, these names and myths were likely only poetic images. The LXX still has Jerusalem as the subject as in the prior verse, which does not fit the overall context.

^m (11) Is 25:8, 30:19, 35:9-10, 44:23, 48:20, 49:13, 60:19-20, 61:7, 65:14, 65:19, 65:24; Ps 109:28; Jr 30:18-19, 31:11-13, 33:11, 115:2; Zep 3:14; Ac 2:41-47; 2Co 4:17-18; 2Th 2:16; Jude 1:24; Rv 5:9-13, 7:9-10, 7:17, 14:1-4, 19:1-7, 21:1-4, 22:3. This is an almost exact repetition of Is 35:10 and, therefore, a reference to the event also described in Chapter 35. That Chapter describes a similar redemption for the Land itself as described in verse 3 of this Chapter and would point again to something beyond the return from Babylon which did not involve this sort of environmental change. It might, allowing for poetic license, refer to 1948 and the blossoming of the Land which came with the founding of the State of Israel, as a partial fulfillment of this prophecy. When the mighty arm of the Lord awakens, at least in the perception of the faithful, the faithful or repentant will be returned to the Land with joy and singing. Sadness will cease. The Redeemed are promised comfort and help on the journey to the Land. As

past events are remember, the prayer turns from petition to praise for the salvation to come. The answer to this prayer will come “while they are yet speaking” (Is 65:24), that is soon, at least in cosmic terms. Joy is pictured as a crown upon the heads of the redeemed (2Sm 1:10). Both blessing and sadness are, in a sense, bestowed upon the head through the laying on of hands (Gn 48:14-20, 49:26; Lv 16:21-22; Ezk 9:10; Jsh 10:24). Sadness, repentance and mourning is signified by the spreading of dirt or ashes upon the head and face (Is 58:5; 2Sm 1:2, 13:19, 15:32; 1Ki 20:31; Neh 9:1; Jnh 3:5-9; Jb 2:12, 16:15, 42:6; Lm 2:10; Dn 9:3; Mt 11:21; Lk 10:13). The *Targum of Isaiah* says a “cloud of glory” will be above the heads of the returning exiles, a possible suggestion of God’s presence among them as with the fiery pillar in the Wilderness () and in possible anticipation of the tongues of fire signifying the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Ac ___).

ⁿ (12) Is 2:22, 15:6, 40:1, 40:6-7, 43:11, 43:25, 51:3, 51:7-8, 57:15-18, 66:13; 2Ki 1:15; Ps 90:5-6, 92:7, 103:15-16, 118:6, 146:4; Pr 29:26; Dn 3:16-18; Mt 10:28; Lk 12:4-5; Jn 14:18, 14:26-27; Ac 9:31; 2Co 1:3-5, 7:5-6; Jas 1:10-11; 1Pt 1:24. In verses 12-15 God answers the prayer found in the prior three verses. He tells them that He is not only awake, but available to respond to that prayer. God tells the faithful that it is He who will comfort them and redeem them, so why are they afraid of mortal men who are as short-lived as grass. This verse does not make sense if it is not concerned with the ultimate fate of man’s eternal soul since the people to whom He is speaking are also mortal. If men do not need to be concerned with anything beyond this lifetime, the mortality of tyrants is of little comfort. It is sometimes said that the Hebrew Scriptures have no reference to the Christian belief in an eternal soul and resurrection, but it is clearly present in this verse, as elsewhere. The Pharisees, and other Jewish sects, but not the Sadducees, with only the Hebrew Scriptures to rely upon, believed in the resurrection of the dead (Ac 23:8).

^o (13) Is 7:4, 8:12-13, 9:4, 10:24, 10:29-34, 14:4, 14:16-17, 16:4, 17:7, 17:10, 33:18-19, 37:36-38, 40:22, 42:5, 44:24, 45:11-12, 45:18, 48:13, 49:26, 54:5, 54:14, 57:11; Gn 1:1; Ex 14:10-13, 14:13, 15:9-10; Dt 6:12, 8:11, 32:5, 32:15-18; Est 5:14, 7:10; Jb 4:17, 8:13, 9:8, 20:5-9, 37:18; Ps 9:6-7, 37:35-36, 76:10, 102:25-26, 104:2; Jr 2:32, 10:11-12, 51:15; Dn 3:15-19, 4:32-33; Am 9:6; Zec 12:1; Mt 2:16-20; Ac 12:23; 1Co 1:20, 15:55; Heb 1:9-12, 11:15; Rv 19:20, 20:9. If we ever doubt our faith, all we have to do is go outside and look at the sky, or a mountain range, or the ocean. God complains that His people forget how powerful God is, and His gracious promises to redeem His people. Alternatively, the oppressor who will pass away like grass and need not be feared in verse 12 is the one who has forgotten God. The faithful are urged not to fear the oppressor because his wrath has passed away. This verse could also be a reference again (as in verse 2) to God having constituted the Jewish people from a man and woman beyond child bearing age (Gn 18:11-14, 21:1-3) and protected His people through the ages. God’s power to liberate and deliver those He calls His own has no limits. Because they did not, day by day, acknowledge God as Creator (Rm 1:___), the Jews continued to fear the oppressor.

^p (14) Is 33:6, 42:7, 45:13, 48:20, 49:10, 52:2; Ezr 1:5, 37:16, 38:6-13; Lm 3:53-54; Zec 9:11; Ac 12:7-8. The **oppressed**, literally those carrying a heavy burden, (**צָעָה**, *tsa’ah*) will be **released** (**פָּתַחַח**, *pathach*) and not **die** (**מוּתָה**, *muwth*) in prison or the **pit** (**שַׁחַת**, *shachath*), Hades, or Sheol (Is 14:9-11), or perhaps prison or a dungeon, and shall always have food, that is the thing needed for life. Read this way, it is again another indication of eternal life for the redeemed. As noted above, this would not really describe the life of the Jews in Babylon, which was comfortable enough so that even after Cyrus II allowed the Jews to return to the Land, many remained. The Jewish community in the region of Babylon endured until it was driven out in 1948 by the new Arab government. These verses can only be seen as speaking to all of the faithful of every age who are, in a sense, exiles on earth with a destiny in Heaven. The *Targum of Isaiah* identifies God as the “avenger” who “hastened to be revealed” and the righteous ones as those who will not die and lack bread. Verse 13 mentions the oppressor so that the oppressed or bowed down in this verse are likely the oppressor’s victims. God will rescue the oppressed who call upon Him.

^q **Lord God** - **Adonai** (**אֲדֹנָי**) **Yahweh**, or **Jehovah**, (**יְהוָה**, YHWH) combines the plural form of lord or master with the Tetragrammaton. See note on the Names of God in the introduction to this Study.

^r **Lord of Hosts** - **Yahweh Tsebaoth** (**יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת**), see note on the Names of God in the Introduction.

^s (15) Is 13:4, 47:4, 48:2, 51:10, 54:5; Ex 14:21; Neh 9:11; Jb 26:12; Ps 74:13, 93:3, 107:25, 114:3-5, 136:13; Jb 16:12; Jr 10:16, 31:35; Am 9:5-6. God first identifies Himself as the God of His people again emphasizing the special place of the Jewish people in salvation history. God then reminds His people of His power, the power to stir up the sea and cause storms. By also identifying Himself as the Lord of Hosts, He emphasizes His power. His name, the Tetragrammaton, drawn from a root meaning “to be,” identifies Him as the God who is and continues to be, that is, the being who is eternal and unchanging. As the ultimate and constant source of all things, He will never lie or deviate from what he has declared or revealed He would do or be. As a result, the Jews could have absolute confidence in His promises. In the Book of Revelations, the Apostle John writes to a number of small, probably house churches, during a time of great persecution initiated by the Emperor Domitian (81-96 A.D.). In effect, John tells them that they will almost certainly suffer and die for their faith, as did the Messiah, but that the Messiah, and they, will be redeemed in the end.

^t (16) Is 40:22, 45:18, 48:13, 49:2, 49:8, 50:4, 59:21, 60:14-15, 60:21, 61:3, 65:17-25, 66:22; Ex 4:12-15, 33:22; Dt 18:18, 33:27; Ps 75:3, 92:13; Jr 7:23, 11:4, 24:7, 31:33, 32:38; Ezk 14:11; Zec 8:8, 13:9; Jn 3:34, 8:38-40, 17:8; Heb 8:10; 2Pt 3:13; Rv 1:1.

Perhaps God continues to speak to the faithful, telling them that He has given them His words for their mouths, perhaps Scripture, the prophets, or simply that they will tell of the Lord to the nations. Both the Servant and Israel (Jn 4:22) are part of God's plan for the redemption of mankind. Or perhaps creation imagery is a metaphor to refer to the transformation that Jerusalem will experience in the eschaton (Is 65:17-18; 2Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1-4). Still others have God directing the verse to the Prophet Isaiah himself. The best interpretation of this verse has God speaking to the Servant, the Arm of the Lord, who spoke just prior to this in Is 50:4-11. Only God established the sky and founded the Earth. And only God can say to Zion that "you are My people." Thus the person to whom God is speaking must also be God which makes sense only if God is speaking to the Second Person of the Trinity, who was present at the creation and participated in it as the Nicene Creed states: "[We believe] . . . in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made. . ." Isaiah introduces the Servant Arm of the Lord slowly, little by little, starting in the early chapters of Isaiah (___) but accelerating in later chapters leading up to Chapter 53. We must put together the clues from these various passages to learn precisely who this Servant is. In Messiah, the original mission of the Jewish people, to bring light to the gentiles, is personified. And we, through participation in Messiah, Jew or gentile, can participate in that mission. The *Targum of Isaiah* identifies the words as God's prophecy applying to His people. "I have put the words of my prophecy in thy mouth, and with the shadow of my power have I protected thee, to raise up the nation, concerning which it hath been promised that they shall be as many as the stars of the heaven, and to establish the congregation it has been promised concerning them, that they shall multiply like the dust of the earth, and to say to the inhabitants of Zion, Ye are my people." The LXX reads, "I will put My words into your mouth, and I will shelter you under the shadow of My hand, with which I fixed the sky, and founded the earth; and the Lord shall say to Zion, You are My people." Thus the same hand that established the heavens and the Earth, where human beings can live, also provides shelter to the one entrusted with the message who will thus be assured of accomplishing His mission.