

ISAIAH LESSON 48

Happy Passover Plus^a
(Isaiah 51:17-52:12)

Isaiah 51:17-52:12 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

The Cup of the Lord's Wrath^b

51 Rouse yourself, rouse yourself,
stand up, O Jerusalem,
you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord^c
the cup of his wrath,
who have drunk to the dregs
the bowl of staggering.^d
¹⁸ There is none to guide her
among all the sons she has borne;
there is none to take her by the hand
among all the sons she has brought up.^e
¹⁹ These two things have befallen you—
who will condole with you?—
devastation and destruction, famine and sword;
who will comfort you?^f
²⁰ Your sons have fainted,
they lie at the head of every street
like an antelope in a net;
they are full of the wrath of the Lord,
the rebuke of your God.^{g, h}
²¹ Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted,
who are drunk, but not with wine:ⁱ
²² Thus says your Lord^j, the Lord,
your God who pleads the cause of his people:
“Behold, I have taken from your hand
the cup of staggering;
the bowl of my wrath
you shall drink no more;^k
²³ and I will put it into the hand of your tormentors,
who have said to you,
‘Bow down, that we may pass over’;
and you have made your back like the ground
and like the street for them to pass over.”^l

Let Zion Rejoice – His Coming Salvation^m

52 Awake, awake,
put on your strength, O Zion;
put on your beautiful garments,
O Jerusalem, the holy city;
for there shall no more come into you

the uncircumcised and the unclean.ⁿ

² Shake yourself from the dust, arise,
 O captive^o Jerusalem;
 loose the bonds from your neck,
 O captive daughter of Zion.^p

³ For thus says the Lord: “You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.”^q ⁴ For thus says the Lord God: My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing.^r ⁵ Now therefore what have I here, says the Lord, seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail, says the Lord, and continually all the day my name is despised.^s ⁶ Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I.”^t

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
 are the feet of him who brings good tidings,
 who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good,
 who publishes salvation,
 who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”^u

⁸ Hark, your watchmen lift up their voice,
 together they sing for joy;
 for eye to eye they see
 the return of the Lord to Zion.^v

⁹ Break forth together into singing,
 you waste places of Jerusalem;
 for the Lord has comforted his people,
 he has redeemed Jerusalem.^w

¹⁰ The Lord has bared his holy arm
 before the eyes of all the nations;
 and all the ends of the earth shall see
 the salvation of our God.^x

¹¹ Depart, depart, go out thence,
 touch no unclean thing;
 go out from the midst of her, purify yourselves,
 you who bear the vessels of the Lord.^y

¹² For you shall not go out in haste,
 and you shall not go in flight,
 for the Lord will go before you,
 and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.^z

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

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^a **Happy Passover Plus.** Although Chapters 40 through 47 talk about Cyrus II of Persia and the liberation from Babylon in a direct sense, with overtones of something more cosmic and eschatological, Chapters 48 through 52, while using the Exile in Babylon as a backdrop, are really talking about something far more than the return from Babylon. As we have seen, the condition of those held prisoner in “Babylon” in these chapters is far worse than the condition of the Jews who had become prosperous and in some cases, powerful, there. And in this section we will see that the redemption for the Jews described is to be permanent, and once and for all. In light of 2000 years of pogroms and persecution, the Holocaust, and constant attacks on the State of Israel in

the present, the redemption from Babylon cannot be what is described in these chapters. This section is divided into three basic parts, Is 51:13-23 is about the wrath of the Lord being over. Is 52:1-10 is about universal salvation (not universalism) and Holy Living. And Is 52:11-12 is Exodus Revisited. Exodus themes and images are present through this section and are key to understanding what Isaiah is saying. Each of these sections begins with a double, “Awake, Awake” for the first two sections and “Depart, Depart” for the third. Also present throughout this passage, as well as the surrounding chapters, is a theme of listening and hearing.

^b **The Cup of the Lord’s Wrath.** Babylon is frequently used in Scripture as an image of a place of evil, the world, and the opposite of Jerusalem (Gn 11:1-9), including in Isaiah itself (Is ____). If so, and if this section of Isaiah is about much more than the physical escape from Babylon under Cyrus II, then the escape from Babylon that is written about here is really about an escape from the Curse (Gn 3:____) of sin and how it wrecks our lives and alienates us from God. God’s people have complained (Is __) that God appears to be sleeping and left them in Babylon to suffer. But God responded that it is not He that is sleeping, but them. Here He tells them to wake up and listen. Jerusalem, likely a personification of God’s people in Exile, has been forced to drink from the cup of God’s anger (Jr 25:15-29) with the resulting physical destruction of the city itself, the loss of liberty and self-government, the exile in Babylon and spiritual and existential loss that must accompany the termination of Temple sacrifice and the apparent abandonment by God (Is 29:9-10; Lm 4:21). But the time when the Jewish people drink the cup is coming to the end. Soon, those who have persecuted them will be given the cup and suffer in their turn (Is 41:1-16).

^c **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 51:20, 51:22, 52:3, 52:4 (combined with *Adonay*), 52:5 (twice), 52:8, 52:9, 52:10, 52:11 and 52:12.

^d (51:17) Is 29:9, 42:25, 51:9, 52:1, 60:1-2, 63:6, 66:15; Dt 28:28, 28:34; Jdg 5:12; Jb 21:20; Ps 11:6, 16:5, 60:3, 75:8-10; Jr 13:13, 25:15-18, 25:27, 48:26, 49:12, 51:7; Lm 4:21; Ezk 23:31-34; Ob 1:16; Hab 2:15-16; Zec 12:2; Mt 20:22, 26:39-42; Mk 10:38, 14:36; Lk 22:42; Jn 18:1, 18:11; 1Co 15:34; Eph 5:14; Rv 14:8-10, 16:9, 16:19, 18:6 The faithful Remnant of Israel had, in Is 51:9-11 called upon the Arm of the Lord, thinking incorrectly that He was asleep, to wake up and rescue them as He had during the Exodus. But God turns the tables and calls upon Jerusalem, likely a reference the faithful remnant of the exiles or to the personified abandoned city, to awake and stand because He has a task for them, to leave Babylon and re-inhabit Jerusalem. The sleep from which Jerusalem is asked to awaken is a drunken stupor caused by drinking (שָׁתָה, *shathah*) and draining (מָצָה, *matsah*) the Lord’s cup of wrath to its bitter dregs (קִבְבָּעַת, *qubbaath*) because of their lawlessness. God’s cup is a reference to the portion that God allots to a person or group, sometimes, as in this case, judgement (), but not always. It can more generally mean a task for mission to which God assigns the person (). The Hebrew emphasizes that the cup is completely emptied by using both drink and drain in this verse, as well as by referring to the dregs, lest the reader should miss the point. The implication is that the Lord measured out the cup, enough to punish Israel, but that the time of punishment was now ended. Drunkenness (Pr 23:29-35), by analogy, implicates the terrible effects of God’s wrath upon His people which were too much for them to bear (Is 29:9, 63:6; Ps 75:8; Lm 4:2; Ezk 23:32-34; Ob 1:16; Hab 2:16; Rv 14:10). In a sense, the wine causes sleep and forgetfulness in which they have forgotten God. But God calls them back now that they have drunk the entire cup.

^e (51:18) Is 3:4-8, 41:13, 45:1, 49:21; Jb 8:20, 31:18; Ps 74:9, 88:18, 142:4; Jr 5:31, 31:32; Mt 9:36; Mt 15:14; Mk 8:23; Ac 9:8, 13:11; Heb 8:9 Some commentators think this is a reference to Jerusalem being deserted. Others think this shows that there was no leadership in the Jewish community (Is 3:1-12) so that God Himself had to step in to lead and comfort the personified city and God’s people just as He would ultimately send His Son to be their Messiah and lead them to salvation. These verses (Is 51:18-20) paint a terrible picture of the condition in which God’s people find themselves. There is no comfort for them, and their sons are gone or worthless, so that there is no future. There is destruction to the people through famine and sword, and physical destruction of the City itself. Israel is like an antelope caught in a net, which cannot help itself. The only one who can help them is God.

^f (51:19) Is 8:21, 9:20, 14:30, 22:4, 40:2, 47:9, 49:13, 54:11, 60:18, 61:2, 62:4; Jb 2:11, 42:11; Ps 69:20; Ec 4:1; Jr 9:17-21, 14:12, 15:5, 24:10, 48:3; Lm 1:9-17, 3:47; Ezk 14:21; Nah 3:7; Am 7:2; 2Co 7:6-13; 2Th 2:16-17 Two evils have come upon Jerusalem, identified by some commentators as evil to the city itself, devastation (שָׁד, *shod*; also havoc, ruin or destruction) and destruction (שָׁבַר, *sheber*; also breach, break, shatter, crush, ruin), and evil to its people, famine (רָעָב, *raab*; also hunger) and sword (חֶרֶב, *chereb*). Other commentators have the devastation and destruction as the abstract form of the more concrete famine and sword, but this seems less likely. There appears to be a play on the two pairs of words in which each pair, in Hebrew, has a similar sound. There is no word for “evils” in the Hebrew text which literally says “two [things] will happen,” with the sense of evil coming from the description of the things which came which are evil. God asks the people who will comfort them, the implication that no human being will do so, either because all the people are gone or because no one among the surrounding nations feels sympathy for the Jews. The *Targum of Isaiah* inserts a phrase indicating that the two evils will become four, “Two tribulations have come upon thee, Jerusalem, thou art not able to arise; when four shall come upon thee, spoiling, and destruction, and famine, and sword, there shall be none to comfort thee beside me.” In all events, the two, or four, things described what happened in and to Jerusalem when the Babylonian siege succeeded.

^g **God - Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים), the plural form of the generic *el* (אֱל). See Note in the Introduction to this Study. אֱלֹהִים appears here and in verses 51:22, 52:7, 57:10 and 52:12.

^h (51:20) Is 5:25, 8:21, 9:19-21, 29:9, 40:30, 49:26, 51:17-21, 66:15; Dt 14:5, 28:20; Ps 88:15-16, 141:10; Jb 18:10, 40:11; Jr 14:16-18, 44:6; Lm 1:15, 1:19, 2:11-12, 2:19, 3:15-16, 4:2, 5:13; Ezk 12:13, 17:20, 39:19; Rv 14:10, 16:9-11 In this verse, Jerusalem is not deserted. Instead, its sons, that is, its people, have fainted () and lie in the streets unable to act. It is the anger of the Lord which has caused them, or allowed them, to faint. The Hebrew word here indicating fainting more often refers to covering or being covered. As used here it may mean that the senses of the people have been “covered” so that they cannot see, hear or feel anything as when someone passes out. Alternatively, it may mean the people are deprived of their senses and are unable to decide what to do so they sit or lie down where they are. The LXX, perhaps carrying some of the latter meaning, reads, “Your sons are the perplexed ones, that sleep at the top of every street as a half-boiled beet; they that are full of the anger of the Lord, caused to faint by the Lord God.” In the Hebrew, the fainted sons are likened to an antelope (אָרְיָ, *teo*) caught in a snare. The meaning of the Hebrew for antelope, used only here and in Dt 14:5 where it appears in a list of animals, is uncertain and might mean wild goat, wild bull, ibex, oryx, gazelle or some other animal. The LXX renders it as “half-baked beet” showing the difficulty of translating the word removed in time only about four centuries from its use by Isaiah. The *Targum of Isaiah* reads, “Thy children shall be torn in pieces, they shall be cast at the head of all the streets as broken vials: they are full of the fury of the Lord, and of the rebuke of thy God.” It is also possible to view the verse as a rhetorical question answering the previous verse, the sense of which would be, “could these senseless men against whom God’s anger has been loosed bring comfort?”

ⁱ (51:21) Is 14:32, 54:11, 63:6 Speaking to the Exiles, and more generally the afflicted (אָנִי, *ani*, also humble, poor, wretched or oppressed; Is 54:11) of all times and places, He describes them as being drunk but not with wine (Is 29:9), referring back to Is 51:17-20, and perhaps indicating people who, before trusting in God, are senseless, without direction and therefor suffering.

^j **Lord - Adonai** (אֲדֹנָי), see note on the Names of God in the introduction. Appears here and in verse 52:4 (combined with YHWH).

^k (51:22) Is 3:12-13, 49:25, 51:17, 54:7-9, 62:8; 1Sm 25:39; Ps 35:1, 60:3; Pr 22:23; Jr 25:15, 50:34, 51:7, 51:36; Ezk 39:29; Jl 3:2; Hab 2:16; Zec 12:2; Mi 7:9; Mt 20:22; Rv 14:10 God pronounces that He, who has given His people the cup of His wrath, will take that cup from the hands of His people (Mt 26:39-42), that their time of punishment has ended.

^l (51:23) Is 14:4, 47:6, 49:12, 49:25-26, 52:2, 66:12; Jsh 10:24; Ps 65:11-12, 129:3; Pr 11:8, 21:18; Jr 25:15-29, 49:12; Zec 12:2; Mi 7:10; Rev 11:2, 13:16-17, 17:6-8, 17:18 God will remove the cup of His wrath from His people and give it to their enemies. The remainder of the verse is likely a reference to a conqueror forcing the conquered to bow low or prostrate themselves putting them in a position to be walked upon. During Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Alter, we receive the cup of forgiveness in the Messiah’s blood (1Co 11:23-29).

^m **Let Zion Rejoice – His Coming Salvation.** God’s people are told to “Awake, Awake” and get ready to depart for Jerusalem. The double imperative is common in Hebrew poetry in Chapters 40-55 (Is 40:1, 51:9, 51:17, 52:11). When the Lord causes His people to be released from Babylon, they will all know His Name, as He previously revealed His Name (Here I am) at the Exodus (Ex 2:25, 6:28; Is 58:9, 65:1), and that He was responsible for their liberation. Complete ritual purity was not possible in Babylon, a place where foreign gods were worshipped. The return to Jerusalem will be a coronation procession for God in which the holy vessels of the Temple will be carried back (Ezr 1:7-11) and the people will celebrate God’s return (2Sm 18:25-27; Nah 1:15). The watchman of the city, the prophets (Is 56:10, 62:6-7; Ezk 3:17, 33:2-7), will rejoice as the procession approaches. This return will be, in some ways, similar to the Exodus from Egypt (Ex 12:11, 13:21-22), but will be different because God will be present permanently with His people.

ⁿ (52:1) Is 1:21-26, 26:2, 35:8, 48:2, 49:18, 51:9, 51:17, 60:21, 61:3, 61:10, 64:10; Gn 34:14; Ex 28:2, 28:40; Est 6:8; 1Sm 2:4; 1Ch 16:29; Neh 11:1; Ps 110:3; Jr 31:23; Ezk 44:9; Dn 10:9, 10:16-19; Nah 1:15; Jl 3:17; Hag 2:4; Zec 3:1-4, 9:8, 14:20-21; Mt 4:5; Lk 15:22; Rm 3:22, 13:14; Eph 4:24, 6:10; Rv 19:8, 19:14, 21:2-27 Once again God calls upon a personified Jerusalem, likely representing His faithful remnant, to wake up and put aside their despair and hopelessness (Is 51:17) and promises them that their humiliation is coming to an end. They are told to “put on their strength” (armor) and their “beautiful garments” (likely priestly garments) signifying, in the immediate future, a return to Jerusalem, the establishment of a government and military forces, and the resumption of Temple sacrifice. The LXX substitutes “glory” for “beautiful garments” though the meaning is likely the same, “Awake, awake, Zion; put on your strength, O Zion; and put on your glory, O Jerusalem the holy city; for the uncircumcised and unclean shall pass through you no more.” Because Jerusalem was to be again a city inhabited by Jews, they could prevent its desecration by foreigners. The image is of Jerusalem, pictured as a woman captured by enemies, without protection, abused and humiliated. She is told to arise because her redeemer is at hand, and to change into clothing suited for a free woman.

^o **Captive** – The MT has, rather than captive (שָׁבִי, sh`viYäh) which also appears in the next line, has שָׁבִי (SH`viy) which might be a form of sit (יָשָׁב, yashav) interpreted as Jerusalem arising from the dust and taking her seat on her throne. Although the LXX, Vulgate, Syriac, 1Qisa (indirectly) and the *Targum of Isaiah* all support the MT reading, the form is almost certainly a transcription error.

^p (52:2) Is 3:26, 9:4, 10:27, 14:25, 29:4, 49:21, 51:14, 51:23, 60:1, 61:1; Ps 9:14, 81:6; Jr 51:6, 51:45-50; Zec 2:6-7; Lk 4:18, 21:24; Rv 18:4 The Personified Jerusalem is encouraged to remove their chains and other symbols of their captivity.

^q (52:3) Is 1:27, 45:13, 50:1, 62:12, 63:4; Ps 44:12; Jr 15:13; Rm 7:14-25; 1Pt 1:18 God's people were sent into Exile, but not as a payment for God's debt, for God could never be indebted to anyone. When they were sold (Is 50:1) the Babylonians had no permanent claim to hold the Exiles captive. Instead, they had been sent into exile because of their sin. And when they are redeemed, God will not redeem them with money. Although Cyrus, who is sometimes referred to as God's servant (), was allowed to conquer vast territories (), his release of the Jews to return to Jerusalem was not an exchange (). Since there had been no payment for their slavery, no payment would be required for their redemption. In a larger sense, however, this verse might be interpreted in light of God giving something of the greatest value, that unique individual, the Servant, for the redemption of His people (Is 52:13-53:12; 1Pt 1:18-19). The concept of being sold for nothing, continuing through verses 4 and 5, shows God's sovereignty over history, and the idea that His redemption is not purchased or due to any act of our own, but to God's good grace.

^r (52:4) Is 14:25, 36:1-37:38; Gn 46:3-6; 2Ki 18:19; Jb 2:3; Ps 25:3, 69:4; Jr 50:17; Jn 15:25; Ac 7:14-15 This verse refers back to the sojourn of Israel in Egypt which ended in the Exodus and the invasion by Assyria which resulted in the exile of the northern Tribes and the siege of Jerusalem, as examples of God's people being sold without cause or for nothing (עָפֶס, ephes). Joseph, as Pharaoh's deputy and with Pharaoh's approval, invited the rest of his family to Egypt to save them from famine without which the Jewish people would have perished and the promise to Abraham unfulfilled. The initial move to Egypt was voluntary and without payment (Gn 45:9-21). The Assyrians were allowed to conquer the Northern Kingdom and invade Judah because of their sin (), but made no payment to God for their oppression of God's people, and in fact were ultimately punished by God for having gone further than God had commanded them to go in that oppression (). This punishment included their defeat at Jerusalem though God's action (), and their conquest by Babylon ().

^s (52:5) Is 22:16, 37:6, 37:28, 47:6, 48:11, 51:20-23, 52:3; Ex 1:13-16, 2:23-24, 3:7; Jdg 18:3; Ps 44:12, 44:16, 74:10, 74:18-23, 137:1-2; Jr 50:17; Lm 1:21, 2:3, 5:13-15; Ezk 20:9, 20:14, 26:20-23, 36:20-23; Zep 1:10; Rm 2:24; 1Tm 6:1 This verse appears to be a rhetorical question by God who, having recited prior cases of His people having been oppressed or exiled without cause or payment, turns His attention to the current exile in Babylon which His people have also been exiled without cause. He observes that the rulers in Babylon howl or **wail** (לָלַל, yalal) and God's name is blasphemed or **despised** (נָאָס, naats). Some commentators suggest **wail** should really read יִהְיוּ לְלַל (yihyollalo) from a root meaning mock or taunt. In either case, the sentence as a whole would appear to refer to the fact that God was held in low repute and insulted as a result of the Jewish captivity in Babylon. The LXX reads, "And now why are you here? Thus says the Lord: Because My people were taken for nothing, wonder and howl. Thus says the Lord: On account of you My name is continually blasphemed among the Gentiles." This implies the howling is by the people of God exiled for nothing, and that God is insulted because of the exiles, either because their defeat and exile shows God's weakness () or because the exiles are behaving in a way which brings disrepute on God. The *Targum of Isaiah* does not begin with a question, "Therefore now I am ready to redeem them, saith the Lord; for my people was sold for naught; the nations that ruled over them boasted, saith the Lord; and they continually, all the day, provoke them to anger, because of the worship of my name." The **rulers** are pictured as boasting or howling gleefully and provoking God to anger by blaspheming His name. The identity of those **rulers** is not clearly described. They could be the Babylonian King and his deputies. Or perhaps they were the leaders among the Jews who wailed and howled as a result of their captivity.

^t (52:6) Is 42:9, 49:23, 49:26; Ex 3:14, 6:3, 33:19, 34:5-7; Nu 23:19; Ps 48:10; Ezk 20:44, 37:13-14, 39:27-29; Zec 10:9-12; Heb 6:14-18, 8:10-11 In referenced to their redemption from Babylon, it will be clear that it was no act of the captives themselves that will free them, but the act of God (). As a result, not only God's people (), but the people of the nations () will know God's name and that He is God. There is also perhaps a reference to God's response to Moses' question asking God's name (), that He is called I am ().

^u (52:7) Is 24:23, 33:22, 40:9, 54:5, 61:1-3; Ps 59:13, 68:11, 93:1, 96:10, 97:1, 99:1; Song 2:8; Mi 4:7; Nah 1:15, 2:1; Zec 9:9; Mt 25:34, 28:18; Mk 13:10, 16:15-16; Lk 2:10, 24:47; Ac 10:36-38; Rm 10:12-15; Eph 6:15; Rv 11:15, 14:6 Jerusalem is in a valley surrounded by hills () so that a messenger coming to Jerusalem from afar would first be seen in the hills approaching the city. This messenger will declare or **publish** (שָׁמַע, shama; also "hear" as in Dt 6:4-9, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord . . .") that **peace** (שָׁלוֹם, shalom) has come, that there will be cheerful tidings (בָּשָׂר, basar) of good (טוֹב, tob) and **salvation** (יְשׁוּעָה, yeshuah), and that God **reigns** or has become King (מָלַךְ, malak) over His people. When a new King is enthroned the people will give a shout such as "Long live the King" or similar affirmation that the King has been declared King (2Sm 15:10; 1Ki 1:11-18; 2Ki 9:13). God is King eternal, of course, but His people have sometimes forgotten this fact. This verse portrays a time when the people will repent and acknowledge God. The declarations of the messenger are related. Because the people have acknowledged

God, they will cease to be estranged from God, and will enjoy peace and salvation through the good news. At this time, the earthly Kings and rulers will be replaced by, or become subordinate to, God and His Messiah (Is 43:15; Jr 3:17, 8:19; Ezk 20:33, 34:11-16; Mi 2:13, 4:7; Zep 3:15) The LXX reads, “[I am present] as a season of beauty upon the mountains, as the feet of one preaching glad tidings of peace, as one preaching good news; for I will proclaim your salvation, saying, O Zion, your God shall reign.” This rendering indicates that God will reveal Himself as being present with His people through what He does for them. God would act at the right time to deliver them and uphold His sovereignty in Zion. St. Paul quotes this verse (Rm 10:12-15) to show the importance of proclaiming the Gospel if it is to have an effect.

^v (52:8) Is 12:4-6, 24:14, 26:1, 27:2, 30:26, 33:17, 33:22, 35:10, 40:9, 48:20, 56:10, 58:1, 62:6; Ex 33:20; Song 3:3, 5:7; Jr 6:17, 31:6-7, 32:39, 33:11; Ezk 3:17, 33:7, 43:1-5; Zep 3:9; Zec 12:8; Ac 2:1, 2:46-47, 4:32; 1Co 1:10, 13:12; Eph 1:17-18; Heb 13:17; 1Jn 3:2; Rv 5:8-10, 18:20, 19:4, 22:4 Continuing the metaphor of verse 7, verse 8 describes the watchmen (תִּשְׁבָּחִים, tsaphah) of Jerusalem as they see the approaching messenger carrying good news. They will shout in unison for joy. They will see the messenger clearly (eye to eye, Nu 14:14). The watchmen of Jerusalem are generally considered to be the Prophets (Ezk 33:1-9; Hab 2:1-4). In the immediate context, the Prophets will prophecy the return of the Jews to Jerusalem (). But in a larger sense, the prophets also speak of a time to come when the Messiah will come with a permanent salvation and the full realization of God’s Kingdom (). Some commentators suggest that rather than the Prophets specifically, this verse applies to anyone watching and waiting for the Lord. The LXX reads, “For the voice of them that guard you is exalted, and with the voice together they shall rejoice; for eyes shall look to eyes, when the Lord shall have mercy upon Zion.” Them that guard is similar to watchmen since both stand guard on the walls of a city. But in the LXX God has mercy on Zion while in the MT He returns to Zion. In the Targum of Isaiah the “watchmen” are the rulers of the people of Zion, “The voice of thy rulers! They are lifting up their voice, together they offer praise; because with their eyes they see the mighty works which the Lord shall do, when He shall return His Shekinah to Zion.” It is similar to the MT in that it predicts a time when God will again be present in Jerusalem. Messiah, as the Son of God and Second Person of the Trinity, was incarnate by the Holy Spirit (), and will return at the end of the age (). He is also Emmanuel, God with us ().

^w (52:9) Is 14:7, 40:1, 42:10-11, 43:1, 44:23, 44:26, 48:20, 49:13, 51:3, 51:12, 54:1-3, 55:12, 58:12, 61:4, 65:18-19, 66:10-13; Ps 96:11-12, 98:4; Zep 3:14-15; Gal 4:27 The personified ruins of Jerusalem now join the shouts of the watchmen for God’s redemption of His people. Either Jerusalem should be interpreted as representing God’s people, or at least the faithful remnant, who show gratitude for God’s salvation, or, less likely, the ruins or **waste places** (חֲרָבָה, chorbah) of the deserted city itself is pictured as becoming joyful at the prospect of God’s, and its people’s, return. In the latter case the return of the people would enable a reconstruction of the city itself. Thus while it is the people who God redeemed directly, this process could also be seen as having redeemed the city. In the former interpretation, the people are pictured as ruins or waste places in the absence of God.

^x (52:10) Is 33:17, 33:22, 45:22, 48:20, 49:6, 51:9, 53:1, 66:18-19; Ex 24:9-11; Ps 22:27, 98:1-3; Lk 3:6; Ac 2:5-11, 13:47; 1Co 13:12; 1Jn 3:2; Rv 11:15-17, 14:6, 15:4, 22:4 The Lord will reveal **His Holy Arm**, that is, His power which, as shown in Is 51:9-11, is the unique individual Servant, who was God’s active agent in redeeming His people during the Exodus. The Arm of the Lord will be revealed, or laid bare (חָשָׁף, chasaph) in the presence of the nations (גּוֹי, goy) and visible to the ends (עֲפָרָה, ephes) of the world (עֲרֵץ, erets) so that all the world will know that it is God who delivered His people. The Arm of the Lord, God’s power, will be terrifying to those who do not trust in God (Is 66:16, 66:24), but for the faithful it will bring joy and deliverance. Elsewhere, there is a promise that the Lord will be revealed to “all flesh” (Is 40:5, 49:26) being essentially synonymous with the nations.

^y (52:11) Is 1:16, 48:20; Lv 5:2-3, 10:3, 11:26-27, 11:45-47, 15:5-33, 22:2-33; Nu 19:11, 19:16; Ezr 1:7-11, 8:25-30; Jr 50:8, 51:6, 51:45; Ezk 44:23; Hag 2:13-14; Zec 2:6-7; Ac 10:14, 10:28; Rm 14:14; 2Co 6:17; Eph 5:11; 1Pt 1:14-16, 2:5, 2:11; Rv 18:4 In the immediate context the people of God are urged to leave Babylon quickly after they are given permission to do so to avoid contamination by the paganism of that place. In particular, those who carry the vessels of God (Ezr 1:7-11) are to purify themselves and hold themselves apart so that they are not rendered unclean. This is in contrast to the advice in Jeremiah to seek the welfare of the city [of Babylon] (Jr 29:7). However, the latter advice was at a time when the people were entering exile which was predicted to last 70 years, while the demand of this verse is made when they are, at last, able to go home. It is likely addressed to the timid among the Exiles would have to choose between the relative comfort and safety of Babylon and risking the long journey back to, and the uncertain conditions in, Jerusalem. In a broader context, we, as people of faith are frequently confronted with the choice between separating ourselves from a polluted and unclean culture in order to retain our own purity, and seeking the welfare of that culture by seeking to bring the Gospel. We are also often confronted with the need to move out from our comfort zone and take risks for the Gospel. The *Lutheran Book of Concord, Apology (1537), Article XXIII – On the Marriage of Priests, 64-66*, reads, “THE SECOND ARGUMENT OF THE ADVERSARIES IS THAT THE PRIESTS OUGHT TO BE PURE, ACCORDING TO IS. 52:11: BE YE CLEAN THAT BEAR THE VESSELS OF THE LORD. AND THEY CITE MANY THINGS TO THIS EFFECT. THIS REASON WHICH THEY DISPLAY WE HAVE ABOVE REMOVED AS ESPECIALLY SPECIOUS. FOR WE HAVE SAID THAT VIRGINITY WITHOUT FAITH IS NOT PURITY BEFORE GOD, AND MARRIAGE, ON ACCOUNT OF FAITH, IS PURE, ACCORDING TO TITUS 1:15: UNTO THE PURE ALL THINGS ARE PURE. WE HAVE SAID ALSO THIS, THAT OUTWARD PURITY AND THE CEREMONIES OF THE LAW ARE NOT TO BE TRANSFERRED HITHER, BECAUSE THE GOSPEL REQUIRES PURITY OF HEART, AND DOES NOT REQUIRE THE CEREMONIES OF THE LAW.

AND IT MAY OCCUR THAT THE HEART OF A HUSBAND, AS OF ABRAHAM OR JACOB, WHO WERE POLYGAMISTS, IS PURER AND BURNS LESS WITH LUSTS THAN THAT OF MANY VIRGINS WHO ARE EVEN TRULY CONTINENT. BUT WHAT ISAIAH SAYS: BE YE CLEAN THAT BEAR THE VESSELS OF THE LORD, OUGHT TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS REFERRING TO CLEANNESSE OF HEART AND TO THE ENTIRE REPENTANCE. BESIDES, THE SAINTS WILL KNOW IN THE EXERCISE OF MARRIAGE HOW FAR IT IS PROFITABLE TO RESTRAIN ITS USE, AND AS PAUL SAYS, 1 THESS. 4:4 TO POSSESS HIS VESSEL IN SANCTIFICATION. LASTLY, SINCE MARRIAGE IS PURE, IT IS RIGHTLY SAID TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT CONTINENT IN CELIBACY THAT THEY SHOULD MARRY WIVES IN ORDER TO BE PURE. THUS THE SAME LAW: BE YE CLEAN THAT BEAR THE VESSELS OF THE LORD, COMMANDS THAT IMPURE CELIBATES BECOME PURE HUSBANDS [impure unmarried priests become pure married priests].”

^z (52:12) Is 26:7, 28:16, 42:16, 45:2, 49:10-11, 51:14, 58:8; Ex 12:11, 12:31-34, 12:39, 13:21-22, 14:8, 14:19-20; Nu 10:25; Dt 16:3, 20:4; Jdg 4:14; 1Ch 14:15; Mi 2:13 While the Exiles were to leave Babylon quickly, it was not to be in haste (Ex 12:11) or a panic since they were going with Cyrus’ permission. As was the case in the Exodus (Ex 14:19), God would lead them and be their rear guard or protector. There is a sense in which the journey will be a procession as the Temple vessels are being carried back to Jerusalem. In the LXX, God gathered His people presumably from all the Earth to return them to Jerusalem.