

Isaiah Chapter 48

Verses 1-11: This message is addressed to the "house of Jacob," which includes both "Israel" and Judah." Both are criticized for calling on God's name but refusing to live by His laws. "I have chosen" (tried), "thee in the furnace of affliction" refers to God's merciful judgment, which has burned away their dross.

Verses 1-2: "Swear by; the name of the Lord ... not in truth": The people were normally Israelites, but their hearts were far from Him. This hypocrisy was common all through Israel's history even to the time of the Lord Jesus. (Matt. 23:3, 13-39).

Isaiah 48:1 "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, [but] not in truth, nor in righteousness."

This is so like the people in our day, who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Jacob shows the family relationship to God. Israel is a spiritual name which covers all believers in Christ the same as the house of Jacob.

God is saying, they pretend to belong to Him, but in sincerity they are not of God. They do not live for God the righteous life. They use His name to get all of the assistance from Him, but do not truly love Him.

Isaiah 48:2 "For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts [is] his name."

Many people today claim to be Christians, but have no Christian attributes in their lives. A Christian is a believer in, and a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is reprimanding these people for the very same thing. They claim to be of the holy city, and of God.

They are the hosts in the statement "LORD of hosts". They have been separated out by the God of Israel as being His. They belong to God and He has entrusted His law to them.

Verses 3-5: The Lord declared events that have happened as He predicted them (41:2-4; 46:10), so the people would not ascribe these events to other gods.

Isaiah 48:3 "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did [them] suddenly, and they came to pass."

God has spoken openly to them. He has not hidden His wishes from them. Everything He promised, He has done. They have witnessed miracle after miracle. They should know, by now, that He is truly God.

Isaiah 48:4 "Because I knew that thou [art] obstinate, and thy neck [is] an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;"

To say "thy neck is an iron sinew" is to say they are stiffnecked. They think too highly of themselves. They are set in their ways and are unteachable. The "brow of brass" indicates they have their thinking covered over so thoroughly, they will not listen, or learn, anything new. Let us look at a couple of Scriptures about this very thing.

Acts 7:51 "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers [did], so [do] ye."

2 Chronicles 30:8 "Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers [were, but] yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you."

A person, or a people who are stiffnecked, and have a brow of brass, cannot be taught of the Holy Spirit, or anyone else. They are closed off to learning.

Isaiah 48:5 "I have even from the beginning declared [it] to thee; before it came to pass I showed [it] thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them."

These people are without excuse, because God told them from the beginning. He goes so far as to say they did not err because of the idols, but because of a hardened heart within themselves.

The idols didn't make them do it. Their wickedness made them do it. A certain comedian in our time has a saying that the devil made him do it. No, the devil did not. His sinful nature made him do it.

Isaiah 48:6 "Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare [it]? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them."

"New things": From this point onward, the prophecies of the Messiah's first and second coming and the restoration of Israel have a new distinctiveness.

Babylon becomes the Babylon of Revelation, (verse 20), and God uses Isaiah to communicate truths about the messianic kingdom on earth and the new heavens and new earth that follow it (11:1-5; 65:17).

(Verse 7), indicates that God had never before revealed these features about the future.

God has tried to reveal Himself to them from the beginning. The secret things of God were not secret to them, but they would not open their hearts and receive the message He was trying to give them.

The wonderful secrets of God were not important enough to them for them to receive.

Isaiah 48:7 "They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them."

This creation is speaking of the secrets of God. They have always been secret to the world. God has revealed them to His own. The natural man cannot know and understand the secrets of God. Even if they were given to him, he would not understand.

The secrets of God must be discerned in the spirit of man. The Holy Spirit of God is our teacher and our guide. Everything has a time table with God. God reveals just as much as we can handle and understand at the moment.

Isaiah 48:8 "Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time [that] thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb."

Even though this was all available to them, they did not open their ears of understanding and know what God was saying to them. They had ears to hear, but they did not hear. God's foreknowledge allowed Him to know from the beginning how treacherous and sinful they were.

Sin is a natural trait of the flesh of mankind. The only way to break the chain of sin in our life is to receive the Lord as our Savior. We must give the control of our will over to our spirit.

Isaiah 48:9 "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off."

“For my name’s sake”: The nation Israel had no merit to prompt God’s favor toward them (verse 8). They deserved wrath and death, but His mercy toward them originates in His desire to be glorified and His desire to display the integrity of His own name.

Israel had lived in sin. They had been unfaithful by worshipping idols. They had ears to hear God, and would not listen. They had eyes to see, and yet would not come out of the darkness of sin to see the Light of God. They deserved to die.

They were disobedient to God in every way. They were God's children, however. They were called by His name. As bad as they were, they were still His. God loved them, and hated their ways. The only thing left to do was to forgive them and start again.

God forgave them for Himself, as well as for them. For His name's sake, He forgave them. God is like a loving parent, who will take their children back and forgive all their sins.

Verses 10-11: “Refined ... chosen”: Since Isaiah’s time, Israel’s testing’s have included the Babylonian captivity and present worldwide dispersion from her land; unlike silver purged in the

furnace, the purging of Israel is not complete, and they are not refined. But God keeps up the afflictions until they are, so His name is not defamed through the destruction of Israel.

The nation will be purged (Zech. 13:1). God's plan is such that He alone, not man or man made idols, will receive credit for Israel's salvation (42:8; Romans 11:25-27, 33-36). The adversaries of God are never to be given legitimate reasons for scoffing at God and His work.

Isaiah 48:10 "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."

Their captivity and affliction had come to make them seek God. Silver is symbolic of redemption, so possibly that is why that is mentioned here. God brings redemption, not man.

They had been in the furnace of affliction to refine them and make them search for God.

Isaiah 48:11 "For mine own sake, [even] for mine own sake, will I do [it]: for how should [my name] be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another."

These were God's chosen people. He would not choose another nation. He would just refine the nation He had chosen. They were known as God's people. To do away with them and start with a new nation would appear that God had made a mistake.

God would put the heat on His nation and make them into what He wants them to be. God will not make a new thing. He will make the thing He already has new again.

Verses 12-22: Both "Jacob" and "Israel" are referred to as "my called" (chosen), despite their failures. He is their "Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Go ye forth of Babylon" is a promise to the Israelites of their future deliverance. Many have seen (in verse 16), a reference to the Trinity.

Isaiah 48:12 "Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I [am] he; I [am] the first, I also [am] the last."

Have you ever heard a father saying, sit up and listen to what I am saying? That is what God is saying here to Jacob and Israel. Those who are called of God must first understand who He is. He tells them here; I am the first and the Last. He is explaining the greatness in the words, First and Last.

Isaiah 48:13 "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: [when] I call unto them, they stand up together."

It annoys me a little when I hear people say, that Satan controls the earth and the near heavens. He does not. God controls the earth, the heavens, and everything beneath the heavens. God

allows Satan a little power, but God is Supreme Ruler. The following is just one minor example of Jesus being in control of all the elements.

Matthew 8:27 "But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"

The Red Sea standing apart at the command of God is another very good example. God speaks to His people in the thunder sometimes. Earthquakes and other bad storms come to cause God's people to draw near unto Him. God even tells the sun and the moon when they are to shine.

The Right Hand is speaking of the doer part of the Godhead. The Word of God, Jesus as we know Him, is Creator God. He is the Right Hand.

Verses 14-15: "Him ... he ... his arm ... him ... him ... his way": Beginning with (verse 6), the prophet began to write of the new things. Babylon is the final one (of Rev. 18), and the instrument of God's judgment is the Messiah.

The pronouns refer to Jesus Christ whom the Lord will anoint to defeat the final Babylon at His second coming and bring Israel to her land and kingdom. That it is not Cyrus is also clear from the statement, "The LORD hath loved Him," which is too strong to apply to the pagan king, but not to God's Beloved, the Lord Jesus.

Isaiah 48:14 "All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these [things]? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm [shall be on] the Chaldeans."

Again, God is challenging them to inquire of the false deities. They will find in comparison that those false gods have nothing to offer. Their help lies in the One True God. It is the Lord God that will destroy Babylon and save His people.

Arm, in the verse above, speaks of judgment.

Isaiah 48:15 "I, [even] I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous."

Cyrus was called of God for this specific job. God will bless Cyrus, as long as he stays in the will of God.

Isaiah 48:16 "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there [am] I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me."

“Sent me”: Here it was not the prophet who spoke, but the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord whom the Lord God and the Holy Spirit will send for the final regathering of Israel and establishment of His kingdom as described (in 61:1-7).

Isaiah is a prophet of God who is bringing the message God has given him for these people. God had sent messengers from the very beginning to warn His people. God has not kept secrets from them. He has desired to fellowship with His people.

The Lord God and His Spirit has sent Isaiah with this message to these people. He has also sent Cyrus to help them.

Verses 17-19: Chastisements of Israel by the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel are for discipline (42:18; 43:13; Heb. 12:10). Some day they will end, when Israel heeds the Lord’s commandments and God’s punishments will turn to prosperity.

A future generation will do so and enjoy the refreshment of a continuous stream of God’s peace and righteousness that rolls over them like the relentless sea (65:18).

Isaiah 48:17 "Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I [am] the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way [that] thou shouldest go."

Only God can redeem these people from the terrible situation they have gotten themselves in. God is the only help for any of us, when all around us fails. God made a path for each of us to follow. He lights that path with the Light of the world (Jesus Christ).

We do not need to grope around in life. We must just keep our eye on the goal before us and follow Him. We cannot fail with God as our help. The Holy Spirit of God is the teacher and our guide. Depend heavily on those teachings. The answer for the people then and the answers for us now, are found in God's Word.

2 Timothy 3:16 "All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

God left us a road map to take us safely through life, it is the Bible.

Isaiah 48:18 "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:"

God's blessings are for His children who obey. To be in the perfect will of God brings peace. The peace of God is like a river that flows from within us and never goes dry. All believers are robed in the righteousness of Christ. It is His righteousness, not ours.

To be righteous before God brings a peace that no one can explain. You can only experience this peace. It is a knowing that all is well with your soul. To be full of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be full of peace. He is our King of Peace.

Isaiah 48:19 "Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me."

“As the sand ... like the gravel”: Because of Israel’s disobedience, God’s promise to Abraham to multiply his descendants (Gen. 22:17), has not yet been finally fulfilled. Even though the nation was temporarily set aside during the Babylonian captivity and during the dispersion before 1948 A.D., and will suffer deadly assaults in the coming time of Jacob’s trouble (Jer. 30:7), God will be true to His promise.

God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as the sand of the sea is for number. That is what is spoken of here. They were reduced to a remnant, but God will make them grow into a mighty nation, if they will follow Him.

Isaiah 48:20 "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it [even] to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob."

“Go ye forth of Babylon”: The worldwide proclamation of deliverance, along with the statement that “the Lord has redeemed ... Jacob” shows that it is not the return of a meager 50,000 Jews from historic Babylon while most stayed in that pagan land, but the final redemption of the nation as Zechariah spoke of it (in Zech. 12:10-13:1), and Paul (in Romans 11:1, 2, 25-27).

A redeemed Israel is to make a complete separation from the final Babylon and its wicked system, and proclaim to the world the Lord’s grace toward the nation. John repeats this command (in Rev. 18:4).

Now that they have been redeemed, they must leave Babylon and all the sin there. To choose to stay in Babylon would be like a Christian choosing to be worldly. It doesn't work. Choose to go with God into freedom. If you are saved, say so. Praise God for all He has done in your behalf.

Isaiah 48:21 "And they thirsted not [when] he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out."

“They thirsted not”: Isaiah pointed to the way that God miraculously provided for Moses’ generation, after He delivered them from Egypt (Exodus 17:6; Isa. 41:17-18), as an illustration of how He will provide for redeemed Israel when they escape the final world empire of Babylon.

God supernaturally furnished them water to drink in the desert. Just as Jesus told the woman at the well, she would never thirst again, if she drank of the water He gave her. This is the water of life.

Isaiah 48:22 "[There is] no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked."

“No peace ... unto the wicked”: Not every Israelite will enjoy the Lord’s salvation but only the faithful remnant who have turned from their wicked ways. The wicked will be purged out before the kingdom of peace is established (Zech. 13:7-9).

Fear, doubt, trouble, and turmoil follow those who are wicked. Peace, true peace, comes from God.

Isaiah Chapter 48 Questions

1. In verse 1, the house of Jacob was called by what?
2. These people have a form of _____, but deny the power thereof.
3. Why are they spoken of as house of Jacob?
4. What is different about the name Israel?
5. They stay themselves upon the _____ of _____.
6. What is His name?
7. What is a Christian?
8. What had God entrusted them with?
9. What should there be no doubt in, because of all the miracles He had done?
10. Verse 4 says they are _____.
11. What is meant by "thy neck is an iron sinew"?
12. What does the "brow of brass" indicate?
13. Stiffnecked people closed off to _____.
14. Why are these people without excuse?
15. Why did they not understand the secret things of God?
16. The creation, in verse 7, is speaking of what?
17. Who is our teacher and our guide?
18. How is the only way to break the chain of sin in our lives?
19. Why will God defer His anger?

20. God had refined them, but not with _____.
21. Why had they been in the furnace of affliction?
22. What hath laid the foundation of the earth?
23. Based on verse 13, what did the author say was annoying?
24. Name two specific places where God controlled the elements.
25. How long will God bless Cyrus?
26. What are the names God is called in verse 17?
27. What is the road map God has left us to direct us through life?
28. Had they hearkened to His commandments, their peace would have been like a _____.
29. Who is King of Peace?
30. For them to stay in Babylon after they had been freed, would be like what for a Christian?