

## Isaiah Chapter 51

Verses 1-16: "Heavens shall vanish away ... and the earth:": Isaiah looks down the corridor of human history to a time when the heavens (atmosphere), and the earth will be no more. He likens the earth to an "old ... garment," meaning the earth will one day wear out (a fact borne out by the second law of thermodynamics). And only the "ransomed" and "redeemed" shall return "with singing unto Zion" and experience "everlasting joy".

Verses 1-2: The prophet assured the nation of deliverance by pointing to God's past covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), who was the rock in the quarry from which they were hewn as a people. Originally, Abraham was only one person, but God multiplied his descendants as He had promised (Gen. 13:16, 15:5; 17:5; 22:17).

**Isaiah 51:1 "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock [whence] ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit [whence] ye are digged."**

In the sense of the house of Israel, whose lineage descended from Abraham, we could say they came from the hole of the pit. Abraham had lived in a land which was full of idol worshippers. Ur of the Chaldees was a land rich in material wealth, but greatly lacking in the spiritual blessings. It was a pit of sin. God called Abraham out of this land.

The physical house of Israel came from a man (Abraham), who was 100 years old, before his son Isaac was born. Of course, Abraham was also the ancestor of all who believe.

We are from the Rock (The Lord Jesus Christ). This message then, is to all who believe and have accepted the righteousness of Christ, as well as those descendants of Abraham who were under the law of righteousness.

"Hearken unto me", means stop what you are doing and listen carefully to me. Those that seek the LORD, find Him. If you are seeking God more fully, this message is for you.

**Isaiah 51:2 "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah [that] bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him."**

This son spoken of here, is not Ishmael, but Isaac. The blessings came through Isaac. Abraham and Sarah's son was Isaac. God did not call Abraham's father and other relatives. He called Abraham. Of this one man God would build a mighty family of believers.

Abraham received the greatest spiritual blessing anyone could have. He believed God, and it was counted unto him as righteousness. He was also, blessed materially. God blessed Abraham with gold and silver and cattle.

Abraham grew into the mighty family of Jacob and his 12 sons. His descendants, as many as the sand of the sea, are all who believe in Christ.

**Isaiah 51:3 "For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."**

“Waste places ... Eden ... desert ... garden of the Lord”: The same God whose power fulfilled His promises to Abraham is to transform Israel’s desolation into a primeval paradise, both nationally and spiritually, causing joy and songs of thanksgiving to ring from it.

This is speaking primarily of the Promised Land. It had become pretty desolate during the Babylonian captivity. God is saying here, He will restore the fertile land, and it will be productive again. The desert is in bloom now in the Promised Land.

Fruit and vegetables are abundant. There is so much of the fruit; they are selling to other countries. This is enough to cause a person to rejoice. It is not a natural thing for a desert to produce like this. Zion, in this particular instance, perhaps, means Jerusalem.

**Isaiah 51:4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.**

“Law ... judgment ... light of the people”: The Servant’s rule over Israel’s earthly kingdom is to cause righteousness to prevail for the benefit of all nations.

God's nation is Israel. We know that Jesus ministered in Jerusalem in the temple. This goes even further than that however. This is speaking of a time when Jerusalem will be the center of worship. Jesus is the Light of the world. Where He is, there is no darkness.

God will send His message forth from Jerusalem (Zion), and from His church (Zion). His law will be written on the hearts of all the believers. The law, of course, is the law of grace. This is speaking of the new covenant God has made with man through belief in Jesus Christ.

**Isaiah 51:5 "My righteousness [is] near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust."**

“Near ... gone forth”: The Servant’s power to restore His people and bring justice, righteousness, and salvation to the world was at work, but God’s perspective differs from man’s reckoning of time. Though near, by God’s reckoning in timeless eternity, the fruition of His deliverance was still many centuries from Isaiah’s day. The nations who survive judgment will trust in Him and enter His kingdom.

Righteousness here, is speaking of the salvation through faith in the righteous One (Jesus). The right arm, or hand, is speaking of the power and authority of Jesus Christ. The "arm and hand" denote work.

The "isles" are speaking of all the faraway lands that will benefit from receiving Christ Jesus as their Savior. The Gentiles accepted Jesus more freely than did the Jews.

**Isaiah 51:6 "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."**

“Heavens shall vanish ... earth shall wax old”: This begins to take place in the time of tribulation (Rev. 6:12-14; 8:12-13; 16:8-10, 21), setting the stage along with the earthly judgments on land, sea, and fresh water, for a renewed earth during the Millennium. The actual “uncreation” or destruction of the present universe, of which Peter wrote (2 Peter 3:10-13), occurs at the end of Christ’s millennial reign on the earth, when a new heaven and a new earth will replace the present creation.

In this Isaiah is looking to the near future of physical Israel's freedom from Babylon. It is speaking of a few hundred years later, when Jesus would come as Savior. It is also, looking through the ages to the culmination of time when the heavens vanish.

We are all cautioned to look up to the heavens and upon the earth. We are told heaven and earth shall someday pass away. Salvation will never stop. It is like the Word, it lives on forever.

Verses 7-8: Israel’s enemies will perish, but the Servant’s salvation will be permanent.

**Isaiah 51:7 "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart [is] my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings."**

We see from this, that God through Isaiah, is saying, "If you love me, do not deny me before men". We are to fear the Lord. We are not to fear men, or what evil they can do to us. Look what Jesus said in the next verses.

Luke 12:8-9 "Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:" "But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

It is really great to know Jesus and have His laws written in the fleshly part of our hearts, but we must also confess Him with our mouth before all who will listen.

**Isaiah 51:8 "For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation."**

The body we are housed in will grow old and die. It will return to the dust from which it came. Righteousness and salvation are in the spirit of man.

1 Corinthians 15:44 "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

The natural body returns to the earth. The spiritual body lives forever in heaven with our Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is not for just a handful of people, but to all generations of people.

1 Timothy 4:10 "For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe."

Verses 9-10: This prayer for deliverance in the future was based on times past when the Lord overcame Rahab, which was a term widely used to refer to things that wreak havoc often, as in this case, Egypt (see Psalm 87:4).

**Isaiah 51:9 "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. [Art] thou not it that hath cut Rahab, [and] wounded the dragon?"**

The "Rahab" here, is not the woman's name who was the harlot. This is a symbolic name for Egypt. It speaks of worldliness. The dragon is speaking of Satan.

This is a warning to wake up and stay strong in the Lord. The message seems to be speaking of past times, when God has overcome Satan. It could be implying the destruction of the Egyptian army at the Red Sea.

**Isaiah 51:10 "[Art] thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?"**

The following Scriptures are a very good description of just what happened at the Red Sea.

Exodus 15:8-10 "And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, [and] the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea." "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters."

God provided dry land for His family to cross over. The minute they were safely on the other side of the sea, God released the water, and it drowned the Egyptians. This is a reminder from God that He protects His own.

Verses 11-16: Again, Isaiah summarized a constant theme, that in all things, He had delivered Israel in the past and is to do so permanently in the future before the nations can be destroyed, verse 14, so they have no need to fear oppressors. The blessing of restored Israel will be evidenced in the joy of verse 11.

**Isaiah 51:11 "Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy [shall be] upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; [and] sorrow and mourning shall flee away."**

This verse is sung in many churches today as a song of praise to God. The house of Jacob will return from Babylon to Jerusalem. They will be filled with joy and praise, because God has redeemed them.

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ will sing praises unto the Lord our Redeemer. We have been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus. Gladness, joy, and singing follow, because we have been redeemed. Sorrow and mourning should not be in the vocabulary of those who have been redeemed.

**Isaiah 51:12 "I, [even] I, [am] he that comforteth you: who [art] thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man [that] shall die, and of the son of man [which] shall be made [as] grass;"**

They should not fear the Babylonians, as we should fear no man today. Men are here today and gone tomorrow. They fade away and are gone. God is everlasting, fear Him.

Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

**Isaiah 51:13 "And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where [is] the fury of the oppressor?"**

I have said before that Satan is the oppressor of mankind. He has no power over that of Christ. He is subject to God. He must get permission from God, before he can even oppress the Christian. Christians cannot be possessed of Satan or the devil, because we are possessed of God. Christ lives in us, and His Light does away with all darkness.

Satan can attack you from the outside. Christians can be oppressed of Satan, or a devil. He attacks us, but cannot override the Light of Jesus to fill you with darkness. He can do whatever he wants with the unsaved, but not with a Christian.

If you are possessed of a devil, repent and be saved. Sometimes we confuse the desires of our flesh with possession.

**Isaiah 51:14 "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail."**

When you are a captive as these Israelites were, you think you will die of starvation. Certainly the luxurious lifestyle they had before is gone. They would take the opportunity as quickly as possible to get out of this bondage.

**Isaiah 51:15 "But I [am] the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared:  
The LORD of hosts [is] his name."**

Some of the Israelites had forgotten who their God was. He reminds them here, He is the Mighty God who parted the Red Sea. He even gives them His name "LORD of hosts".

**Isaiah 51:16 "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou [art] my people."**

“Put my words in thy mouth”: Israel had been the unfaithful depository of divine revelation (Rom. 9:1-5), but the time is coming when God will put words into the mouths of His future faithful remnant (59:21), when He sets up the Kingdom of Messiah in Zion on a renewed earth (51:6; 65:17; 66:22).

God had miraculously protected these Hebrews from the beginning of Abraham. He gave them His law at Mount Sinai. Zion is used here instead of Jerusalem, so that this extends to the church, as well.

Perhaps, this is speaking of divine protection for all of God's people here on the earth, until the new heaven and new earth comes.

Revelation 21:1 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

Verses 17-23: God call “Jerusalem” to “awake” from her spiritual drunkenness. God has made her drunk. Thus, they are “drunken, but not with wine” because they are intoxicated by their own sins.

Verses 17-18: “Jerusalem ... drunk ... cup of his fury”: Jerusalem experienced the Lord’s anger through her extended subservience to foreign powers with no human to deliver her (verse 18), but the punishment will end (verse 22; 40:1-2; 29:9). On the other hand, Babylon will drink from the cup of His anger forever (Rev. 14:8-11; 16:19).

**Isaiah 51:17 "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, [and] wrung [them] out."**

We know the cup of God's fury was felt by them when Jerusalem was taken, and they were sent captive to Babylon. God allowed this to happen to humble them and make them seek the face of the Lord.

**Isaiah 51:18 " [There is] none to guide her among all the sons [whom] she hath brought forth; neither [is there any] that taketh her by the hand of all the sons [that] she hath brought up."**

There was no one left of the house of Jacob who would lead the people against their oppressors. They had no one step forward as a leader. God had to help them Himself.

**Isaiah 51:19 "These two [things] are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?"**

“Two things”: The city of Jerusalem (verse 17) had suffered twofold loss - of property (“desolation and destruction”), and human life (“famine and sword”).

In this Scripture, we see the hardships that came upon them in captivity. There was no help in sight for them. They were desperate. God will comfort them Himself.

**Isaiah 51:20 "Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God."**

“Thy sons have fainted”: The city’s inhabitants lay helpless in the streets, having expended all their strength in fighting unsuccessfully against the Lord’s fury (40:30).

Even their young men felt helpless to do anything to free them from this captivity. They were like a bull caught in a net, helpless. They are under judgment from God, and no one can stand under that. This rebuke was to cause them to repent of their idols and return to true worship of God.

Verses 21-22: “Drunken ... but not with wine”: Jerusalem was drunk through drinking the cup of God’s wrath (63:6). But, in contrast to Babylon, which drank the fury of God’s wrath to the last drop (verse 17; Rev. 18:6). Israel will have the cup removed before all the wrath is consumed. It will be handed to Israel’s oppressors for them to drink the full fury.

**Isaiah 51:21 "Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine:"**

There was no wine in captivity. They were drunk from weakness. They were afflicted and weak from the oppression they suffered.

**Isaiah 51:22 "Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God [that] pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, [even] the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again:"**

Their Lord, the LORD has delivered them from such great oppression. He has given them their homeland back. God, Himself has taken the oppression away. God has acted in their behalf and restored them.

**Isaiah 51:23 "But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over."**

Babylon had been very powerful in the sight of the world. They were thought of as being safe from any harm. God changed all that, and they were captured and destroyed themselves.

The followers of the Lord are back in their homeland free. The Babylonians are now suffering all the shame and humiliation that they had brought on the Israelites.

### **Isaiah Chapter 51 Questions**

1. Who is verse 1 addressed to?
2. How could we say they came from the hole in the pit?
3. What was the pit?
4. Who is the Rock?
5. What does "Hearken unto me" mean?
6. The son, spoken of in verse 2, is not \_\_\_\_\_, he is \_\_\_\_\_.
7. What was the greatest spiritual blessing that Abraham received?
8. What was Abraham blessed with materially?
9. For the LORD shall comfort \_\_\_\_\_.
10. He will make her wilderness like \_\_\_\_\_.
11. What are abundant in the area that used to be desert?
12. God's nation is \_\_\_\_\_.
13. God will send His message from where?
14. What law is verse 4 speaking of?
15. What is the righteousness in verse 5?



16. What do the "arm and hand" denote?
17. Who are the "isles" in verse 5?
18. What different things is verse 6 speaking of?
19. What will happen to the body we are housed in?
20. What happens to the spiritual body?
21. Who is "Rahab" in verse 9?
22. Who is the dragon?
23. Where do we find a good description of what happened at the Red Sea?
24. Can a Christian be possessed of a devil?
25. What is the miraculous protection in verse 16?
26. What two things had come upon them (verse 19)?
27. What did God do to Babylon?