

Isaiah 46-54 • On the Other Side of Judgment

Introduction

We will look at several passages in Isaiah that repeat a theme of teaching concerning the specific role of Israel in God's overall plans for mankind, as well as the example that they have and continue to serve to everyone.

¹Bel has bowed down, Nebo stoops over;
Their images are consigned to the beasts
and the cattle.

The things that you carry are burdensome,
A load for the weary beast.

²They stooped over, they have bowed
down together;

They could not rescue the burden,
But have themselves gone into captivity.

³“Listen to Me, O house of Jacob,
And all the remnant of the house of Israel,
You who have been borne by Me from
birth

And have been carried from the womb;

⁴Even to your old age I will be the same,
And even to your graying years I will
bear you!

I have done it, and I will carry you;
And I will bear you and I will deliver
you.

¹Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to
His disciples, ²saying: “The scribes and
the Pharisees have seated themselves in
the chair of Moses; ³therefore all that they
tell you, do and observe, but do not do
according to their deeds; for they say
things and do not do them. ⁴They tie up
heavy burdens and lay them on men’s
shoulders, but they themselves are
unwilling to move them with so much as
a finger.

⁶He says, “It is too small a thing that You
should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to
restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also make You a light of the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end
of the earth.”

[Read 46:1-2]

Q: What is this a picture of and why?

A: This is a picture of the spiritual weight of idolatry on our lives, that the weight is as much as the **real, physical** weight of those idols on our shoulders. Note the words “bowed down”, “stoops over”, “burdensome”, “a load”, etc.

[Read 46:3-4]

Q: What is the contrast of the One True God to all the false gods?

A: God’s willingness to not be a spiritual burden on us, but in fact to actually bear the burden Himself. Note the words “borne”, “carried”, “I will bear you”, “I will carry you”, “I will deliver you.”

[Read Matthew 23:1-4]

Q: To what does Jesus liken the Pharisees’ implementation of religion?

A: (v.4) “They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders...”
It’s the same effect as idolatry.

Application: How do we free ourselves from the spiritual burdens that keep us from truly worshiping and serving Christ? [Hint: See verse 3]

Point: Only when we return to Him can the burdens of our life—our sin—be relieved so that we can be restored to Him.

[Read 49:6]

Q: What does the reference in v.6 to “My Servant” mean?

A: The work of God to be fulfilled through Israel will come through the Messiah.

Q: What are the 3 things to be fulfilled by the Messiah through Israel?

- “To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel...”
- To be “a light of the nations”
- “...that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Q: Have these all been accomplished? Is God’s work through the Messiah completed?

A: No. Parts of these began with Jesus’ First Coming, but they are yet to be completed, particularly the “resurrection”, so to speak, of Israel.

¹⁴But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me,

And the Lord has forgotten me.”

¹⁵“Can a woman forget her nursing child
And have no compassion on the son of
her womb?

Even these may forget, but I will not
forget you.

¹⁶Behold, I have inscribed you on the
palms of My hands;

Your walls are continually before Me.

[Read 49:14-16]

Q: During what times might Israel come to believe that God has forsaken them?

A: During the times of God’s judgment when they’ve been dispersed from the land of Israel, such as the Babylonian captivity and the dispersion that began during the Roman Empire and continues to this day.

Q: Why would they think like that? Is there any basis on which they would draw that conclusion?

A: If we study judgments rendered by God on other nations/peoples, they very rarely survive. For instance, during Israel’s 490 years of captivity in Egypt, God provided the nations of Canaan the opportunity to repent and reconcile with Him. But because they completely rejected Him for false gods, He devoted them to complete destruction. It’s a very common result of idolatry, which is the major crime for which Israel is being punished.

Q: What does the reference mean in v.16, “I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands”?

A: It’s probably a reference to Exodus 13:9:

“And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt.”

They were supposed to inscribe God’s Word on their own self as a reminder and act of faithfulness to Him. Here God is using their own terms to describe **HIS** faithfulness and remembrance of His own Word to restore them, a very powerful object lesson of God’s love and grace in contrast to their unfaithfulness.

[Read 49:22-26]

²²Thus says the Lord GOD,

“Behold, I will lift up My hand to the
nations

And set up My standard to the peoples;
And they will bring your sons in their
bosom,

And your daughters will be carried on
their shoulders.

²³Kings will be your guardians,
And their princesses your nurses.

They will bow down to you with their
faces to the earth

And lick the dust of your feet;

And you will know that I am the LORD;
Those who hopefully wait for Me will not
be put to shame.

²⁴“Can the prey be taken from the mighty
man,

Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”

²⁵Surely, thus says the LORD,

“Even the captives of the mighty man will
be taken away,

And the prey of the tyrant will be

Q: If Israel has been removed from the Promised Land and for so long been held in captivity that it has lost hope in God, what do they represent spiritually?

A: Israel is a type of resurrection.

Q: What is the stated purpose of this work?

A: (v.26) “*And all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer...*” The power of the resurrection reveals the Source of the power.

Point:

- *The nation Israel should have never returned from Egypt, much less retained an independent, group identity.*
- *The nation Israel should have never come back from Babylon.*
- *The nation Israel should have never remained in tact under various foreign rulers.*
- *The nation Israel should have never come back from the Roman dispersion.*
- *Jews should not have retained their identity in the many and varied nations in which they’ve been living these nearly 2,000 years.*
- *Can you provide even one other example of this occurring throughout human history?*

rescued;
For I will contend with the one who
contends with you,
And I will save your sons.
²⁶I will feed your oppressors with their
own flesh,
And they will become drunk with their
own blood as with sweet wine;
And all flesh will know that I, the LORD,
am your Savior
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of
Jacob.”

⁷How lovely on the mountains
Are the feet of him who brings good
news,
Who announces peace
And brings good news of happiness,
Who announces salvation,
And says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”
⁸Listen! Your watchmen lift up their
voices,
They shout joyfully together;
For they will see with their own eyes
When the LORD restores Zion.
⁹Break forth, shout joyfully together,
You waste places of Jerusalem;
For the LORD has comforted His people,
He has redeemed Jerusalem.
¹⁰The LORD has bared His holy arm
In the sight of all the nations,
That all the ends of the earth may see
The salvation of our God.

¹³Behold, My servant will prosper,
He will be high and lifted up and greatly
exalted.
¹⁴Just as many were astonished at you,
My people,
So His appearance was marred more than
any man
And His form more than the sons of men.
¹⁵Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account
of Him;
For what had not been told them they will
see,
And what they had not heard they will
understand.

- Within just 2 or 3 generations most Americans almost completely disassociate themselves from “the old country”.
- Conquered nations and people are more commonly absorbed and rarely return to their autonomous pre-conquered states after a single war, much less 20 centuries of exile.

Point: God’s repeated “resurrection” of Israel is a precursor as well as testimony to the resurrection of Christ, and the power and work of the resurrection in those who follow Him.

[Read 52:7-10]

Q: To what does this passage speak?

A: The restoration—or resurrection, if you will—of Israel.

Q: Why will God do this?

A: According to v.10, “That all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.”

[Read 52:13-15]

Q: To what does this passage speak?

A: The resurrection of the Messiah

Q: Why will/did God do this?

A: (v.15) “...He will sprinkle many nations...”

Q: What does it mean to “sprinkle”?

A: It’s the Old Testament ritual of making something pure by the sprinkling of blood, in this case Christ’s blood.

Point: The Messiah came through Israel and initiated a work that is still to be completed through Israel. This is why we cannot simply dismiss God’s work in Israel and the associated prophecies; they are the very **real** and **visible** evidence of the existence of God and His work on this planet to this day and for the future.

⁹“For this is like the days of Noah to Me,
When I swore that the waters of Noah
Would not flood the earth again;
So I have sworn that I will not be angry
with you
Nor will I rebuke you.

¹⁰For the mountains may be removed and
the hills may shake,
But My lovingkindness will not be
removed from you,
And My covenant of peace will not be
shaken,”
Says the LORD who has compassion on
you.

[Read 54:9-10]

Q: What awaits God’s people on the other side of judgment when they return to Him?

A: Grace, peace, compassion.

Overall Application:

- *How does this speak to you about the role of the Gospel in your life?*
- *Are others seeing the power of the resurrection in **your** life, and therefore seeing the One who can resurrect **their** life?*
- *What is awaiting **you** on the other side of judgment?*