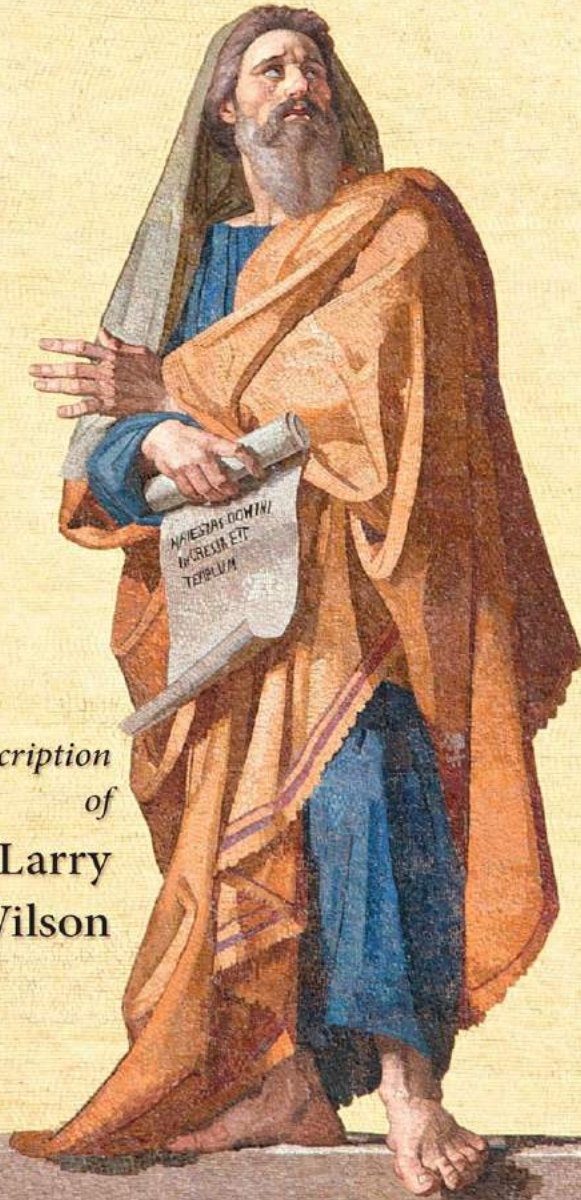


Isaiah



Transcription
of
**Larry
Wilson**

UNDERSTANDING PLAN A / PLAN B IS CRUCIAL

Isaiah

Transcription
of
Larry
Wilson

UNDERSTANDING PLAN A / PLAN B IS CRUCIAL

ISAIAH

Copyright © 2023

First Edition, September 2023 / All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-9848102-4-6

Scriptural quotations are taken from The Holy Bible:
New International Version® NIV® Copyright© 1973 1978
1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ / & / New Living Translation,
copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation.

Used by permission.

Larry W. Wilson

Wake Up America Seminars, Inc.

P.O. Box 273, Bellbrook, Ohio 45305

(800) 475-0876

On occasion, italics and brackets in Scripture quotations have been added to enhance understanding. They are not intended to change the meaning of the texts, only to clarify. We encourage you to consider them and hope they will provide you with deeper insight as you study God's Word.

Acknowledgments

Like the other Transcript Series books, this one owes so much to all who support this ministry so faithfully. May the Lord bless you more than you can possibly hold. A special thank you also goes to Donna, Eunice, Diana, and Marty for their extraordinary help and contributions.

Rex Johnson

Dedicated to the memory of Larry W. Wilson. The man who introduced me to Jesus.

BOOKS BY
LARRY W. WILSON

Hebrews (2023)

Righteousness By Faith (2021)

The Untold Story of Jesus (2019)

No More Delay (2018)

The Lamb's Book of Life (2016)

Jesus' Final Victory (2011)

Daniel Unlocked For the Final Generation (2003)

Bible Stories with End Time Parallels (2002)

Warning! Revelation is About to be Fulfilled (1989)

Table of Contents

Introduction	<i>1</i>
Speaking God's Words	<i>7</i>
Prophets Get No Respect.....	<i>25</i>
The North & The South	<i>45</i>
What God Intended	<i>61</i>
The Allure of Sin	<i>77</i>
Plan A / Plan B.....	<i>91</i>
The Carnal Heart	<i>107</i>
Earth's Cup of Iniquity	<i>125</i>
No More Sin	<i>141</i>

Introduction

This book is a study of Isaiah, who ministered between 739 and 681 BC. He died approximately seventy-five years before Babylon took Israel captive. This detail is important because of what God says to His people through Isaiah.

Most scholars divide the Book of Isaiah into two segments. The first thirty-nine chapters discuss God's judgment concerning His anger with Israel. The last twenty-seven explore the glory of Israel and the restoration and establishment of God's kingdom.

Because there are sixty-six chapters in the Book of Isaiah, a comparative parallel is made with the sixty-six books of the Bible. I see why people make that assumption; each chapter in Isaiah is similar to the numeric equivalent in the Old and New Testaments. However, as we delve into Isaiah, you will notice that it is very much like the Book of Revelation. I believe the Book of Isaiah is about *Plan A*, while the Book of Revelation is about *Plan B*.

The two books use some of the same language, phrases, and concepts. The main difference between *Plan A* and *B* is that *Plan A* was to immediately follow the seventy weeks ending in AD 33. Only today, the names of nations and players are different than they would have been.

For those who have not heard of *Plan A / Plan B*, the concept is pivotal in understanding the Old Testament prophets. *Plan A* is this: God chose the descendants of Abraham to be His representatives on earth. These people were not unique in that God loved them more than anyone else; they were special in that they had the duty, the opportunity, and the privilege to

be His intermediaries—a holy nation leading the rest of the world to a knowledge of the living God.

But Israel failed to achieve what God planned, and ultimately rebelled. That is why the nation of Israel was punished repeatedly as time ticked closer to *the end* of His thirty jubilees of patience. A jubilee cycle is a unit of forty-nine years (seven ‘sevens’). From the Exodus in 1437 BC to the conclusion of the seventieth week in AD 33, there are precisely thirty jubilee cycles.

Isaiah’s ministry began about the halfway point of God’s patience with Israel. This was when Isaiah began revealing prophetic information that would serve as encouragement and inspiration to Israel. Under *Plan A*, had Israel been faithful, they would have informed the world of the living God and His offer of salvation. They would have essentially evangelized a world which had split into two parts.

Israel’s Northern Kingdom was utterly destroyed in 722 BC, just ten years later. When Isaiah began his work, God predicted Israel would be punished for their apostasy; but He was also going to provide restoration and enable them to accomplish all He wanted.

This was attributed back to His love for Abraham. God wanted a nation of baby Abrahams so the world could be evangelized. The difficulty in evangelizing the world under *Plan A* will be identical under *Plan B*.

In Joel 2, the Lord promised to pour out His Spirit upon all people—men and women. The old men would dream dreams and the young men would see visions, even upon the handmaidens of the Lord. Through the Spirit, God wanted to accomplish a great enlightenment of the world through Israel, demonstrating and educating the world about the living God. If Israel had been willing to receive the Spirit, it would have been given to them. They then could have evangelized the world because God would have brought the nations to them. This was part of the drama unfolded in Isaiah.

The books of Joel, Micah, and Obadiah refer to the Day of the Lord being near, and it was. When God steps into the affairs of man to bring about the end of sin, it will be a supernatural event—not a natural phenomenon. This divine event will establish His kingdom of righteousness. Under *Plan A*, God would have accomplished this through the offspring of Abraham.

In Isaiah 7, we read that Jesus would have been born during that time. Yet it didn't happen that way. But when we reach the end of the 70 weeks, Christ had come, lived, then died in AD 30—the middle year of the AD 27 to AD 33 week. That is the 7-year time period that followed the 69th week. Time is a continuum. There is no space between 11:59 and 12:00; it is the same with all increments of time. The 70th week happened after the 69th and before the 71st.

The Bible says of Christ the Messiah, **“He came unto his own and his own received him not.”**¹ The entire phenomenon of the Christian faith is evidence of Jewish rejection. Likewise, the presence of the Protestant faith is evidence of Christian apostasy. The appearance of the 144,000 will show that Protestantism, too, has failed.

In fact, the coming presence of the 144,000 is a final testimony to the failure of all religions. It demonstrates that God cannot use a corporate structure to accomplish His will. The 144,000 will not be structured as an organized group.

In John 10:16, Jesus said, **“I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.”** Where did Protestants come from? Out of Catholicism. Where did Catholicism come from? Out of Judaism. When God calls the 144,000, they will be sincere, dedicated, and devout individuals of faith from all religious systems. There will be some Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and Hindus. There might even be a Democrat or Republican! I realize that is pushing what the

¹ John 1:11 KJV

Bible says to the extreme, but everyone has a chance! Seriously though, God has people in every culture and every religion. He knows their hearts; He knows who is genuine.

In Revelation 10, Jesus gives the 144,000 the little book to eat. He puts His words in their mouths to give them understanding for proclaiming the gospel during the last days. He will have people speaking to their brothers and sisters on His behalf.

I need to digress for a moment to explain something of importance. If a Muslim came to us claiming to have Holy Spirit power, presenting a Christ that was different from anything we had heard before, what is the chance of accepting his testimony?

Most Christians are unfamiliar with the Muslim religion and culture. I would say Christians have a built-in prejudice against it. It is natural for mankind to be prejudiced. Christians aren't going to feel comfortable accepting what a Muslim, Jew, or Hindu has to say. Our ethnic, cultural, and religious heritage won't allow for that. The fact is, whatever religion one is born into, he dies out of; it's the only way to leave.

God is going to pour out the Spirit upon His servants. He will give each one words to speak just as He gave Ezekiel. Before God gave Ezekiel the words, he didn't know what to say. Isaiah didn't know what to say until the angel brought coals from the altar and touched his lips. This demonstrates that God cannot use a corporate body. Rather, His majesty is revealed in that He can use the sincere-in-heart of any religion to proclaim His gospel. In the end time, there will be Muslim brothers talking to Muslims, Hindus talking to Hindus, and Chinese talking to Chinese.

Jesus was definitely outside the mainstream religion of His day. Very few could really 'hear' Him. Even fewer genuinely received Him. This was Isaiah's dilemma. Isaiah was shown many revelations but couldn't convince anyone to pay attention. So when Christ came and died on Calvary, He pronounced the

final benediction on His covenant with Israel.

In Matthew 23:38, He said, **“Look, your house is left to you desolate [empty].”** By this He meant *it was over!* John 1:11 states, **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”**

Afterwards, Jesus empowered the twelve apostles to **“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”**¹

Jesus was telling them to do what Israel failed to do. It was the re-giving of the covenant, commission, and privilege Israel had, but failed to accomplish.

When Gideon was called to lead a group of three hundred soldiers against the whole Midianite army, God wouldn't let them have swords. God wanted them to know His power was going to win the battle, not theirs.

This same idea explains why there will only be 144,000 servant prophets during the Great Tribulation. It is imperative that everyone understand that man did not do this. It will testify to the marvelous care and concern of our loving Creator.

¹ Matthew 28:19–20

CHAPTER 1



Speaking God's Words

We begin the story about halfway through God's *thirty jubilees of patience* with Israel. Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea lived at the same time. Hosea had been prophesying for about twenty years when Isaiah began his work. About six years later, Micah began his work. Geographically, Hosea was preaching to the northern kingdoms, while Micah and Isaiah were speaking to the two kingdoms in the south.

Isaiah 1:1. **“The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.”** This vision lasts through several kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The reign of these kings lasted from 790 BC to 690 BC which is 100 years.

The language of the verse is a little misleading; Isaiah had several visions. The Holy Spirit came to him on numerous occasions throughout his lifetime with many visions.

For example, when John was given the book of Revelation,

I don't believe he was given all of it in one day. John does say, **"On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit,"**¹ but all that he saw came in segments, and he wrote it down as such. I believe that's the way inspiration happens primarily. Besides, if so much information were received at once, I think it would be too difficult to correlate and write it all down.

Isaiah begins with a statement, **"Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth! For the Lord has spoken: 'I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.'"**² Hosea said, **"My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge."**³

Isaiah is speaking the Lord's words, "My people do not understand my ways, my desires, my love for them, or my place in their life. Even the ox knows its master. Yet, my people don't know me."

"Woe to the sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him."⁴ How could one articulate more rejection in human language? Total rejection of the Lord is being exhibited in this verse.

In verses 5–8, God asked, **"Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with olive oil. Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers. Daughter Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, like a city under siege."** If

1 Revelation 1:10

2 Isaiah 1:2–3

3 Hosea 4:6

4 Isaiah 1:4

you've ever been to a hunting cabin, you know it's very primitive; there are no luxuries.

Isaiah continued, **“Unless the Lord Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah. Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the instruction of our God, you people of Gomorrah!”**¹

The Lord then said something pretty amazing to His people, **“The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?”** says the Lord. **“I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts?”**²

“Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood! Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”³

Then Isaiah continued with these famous words: **“‘Come now, let us settle the matter,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things [the best] of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured**

1 Isaiah 1:9–10

2 Isaiah 1:11–12

3 Isaiah 1:13–17

by the sword.’ For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. See how the faithful city has become a prostitute! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her—but now murderers! Your silver has become dross, your choice wine is diluted with water.”¹

He went on to describe the corruption in the city’s government. “Your rulers are rebels, partners with thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow’s case does not come before them. Therefore the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, declares: ‘Ah! I will vent my wrath on my foes and avenge myself on my enemies. I will turn my hand against you; I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities. I will restore your leaders as in days of old, your rulers as at the beginning. Afterward, you will be called the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City.’”² God turned His back on Israel. He called them His enemies.

If you were to walk into church and say, “God has not heard one prayer made here today. He hates it. This whole assembly makes Him nauseous.” What would be the outcome of such a statement? This verse describes similar events occurring in Isaiah’s time. The judges were corrupt. No one received justice.

From Obadiah through Isaiah, it was the same story; the same grievance in every case: lack of integrity, lack of compassion, and lack of morality. God was utterly disgusted with the behavior of His people.

At this time in history, the form of government was a church-state. The government was the church. Priests handled the nation’s religious and political affairs.

There were kings, but they always went to the priests for permission. The priests had the higher authority until the worship of foreign gods became prominent, then the political

¹ Isaiah 1:18–22

² Isaiah 1:23–26

side took more power for the kings.

God had been trying to get Israel's attention; much like a parent would try to get a child's attention. But this is worse, I think, because in verses 5–7 they persisted in rebellion! Their whole country had been trashed, and still, they were not paying attention.

Their problem was the carnal heart. The carnal heart cannot willfully submit to God's authority unless the Spirit enables it. It may not be happy about submitting, but it isn't reluctant. Jesus wasn't happy about going to the cross;¹ He asked the Father to take the cup of suffering from Him, but He was perfectly willing to go. This is the cooperation and compliance the Spirit is looking for. If you open your heart and let the Spirit in, then submission to the will of God is possible.

David wrote, **“I delight to do thy will, O my God; yes, thy law is written in my heart.”**² The dilemma for Israel was that corporately there weren't enough people whom the Spirit of God could inhabit to turn Israel from their apostasy.

Think of a nation or a church as an aircraft carrier with the majority of its people holding the steering wheel. The majority always rules, but not in the way most people believe. The reality is, it's a minority who holds the majority of power. It has always been this way. And the minority doesn't care whether it's acquired by compliance or coercion.

God came down to Israel and gave them the message, but there weren't enough people to turn the rudder for the nation. So corporately, their ship went out to sea and sank. You can apply this to the USA today. How far are we from being like Sodom and Gomorrah? At what point will God speak to America as He spoke to Israel through Isaiah?

Isaiah Chapter 2 starts a vision which continues through Chapter 4. Remember, Isaiah didn't write his book with chapters and verses. It was only years later, when the Bible

¹ Luke 22:42

² Psalm 40:8 KJV

was being assembled that chapter and verse designations were placed where the original printer thought best. They did this to help the reader find verses quickly.

Even though chapter and verse formatting is an improvement, it can be misleading. When Isaiah wrote the following vision, it was all one piece, just as one would write a letter. It is one vision which covers three chapters. After the spanking of Chapter 1, God zooms forward to the last days to give Israel a glimpse of what is possible and what would be forthcoming, if they were found faithful.

Go to Isaiah 2:2, **“In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.”** This statement is quite amazing in light of what the religion of Judaism taught. Baal worship was always conducted on top of mountains or high hills. The worship of God was always on the sacred mountain—Mount Moriah. In Isaiah’s time, each nation had its own God. The conquest and authority of that respective nation proved the superiority of each God. In 605 BC, when the Babylonians took Israel captive, Marduk, the God of the Babylonians, was deemed highly superior to Jehovah, the God of Israel, because Marduk had been able to overcome Jehovah.

In ancient times, the primary God of Egypt was Ra; the main gods of Rome were Thor and Zeus. So when conquering another nation, the victory was attributed to their God who enabled them to defeat the lesser nation. It was the battlefield victory that proved which God was greater.

Moving forward about thirty-five years, **“In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah’s reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. Then the king of Assyria sent his field commander with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. When the commander stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer’s Field, Eliakim son of**

Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went out to him.

The field commander said to them, ‘Tell Hezekiah [the following]: “This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours [that you can withstand our siege]? You say you have counsel [a strategy] and [military] might for war—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces [wounds] the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. But if you say to me, ‘We are depending on the Lord our God’—isn’t he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You must worship before this altar?’”’¹

He was alluding to the fact that if Israel’s God is as powerful as claimed, how can His altar be moved arbitrarily? He told you where to place His alter and you moved it.

Verses 8–10, “Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses—if you can put riders on them! How then can you repulse one officer of the least of my master’s officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this land without the Lord? The Lord himself told me to march against this country and destroy it.”

Sennacherib’s field commander was talking like this to intimidate Hezekiah and his people. He was about to lay waste the city of Jerusalem and was taunting Israel, “Isn’t my God more powerful than your God? You are so small and weak that you can’t even put two thousand men on horseback.”

“Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, ‘Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don’t speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of

¹ Isaiah 36:1–7

the people on the wall.’

But the commander replied, ‘Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the people sitting on the wall—who, like you, will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine?’

Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew, ‘Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you! Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord when he says, “The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.”’

Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.”¹

The commander spoke in Hebrew so the Israelites could understand and be afraid, hoping this would incite them to rebel against their king. “Do not let Hezekiah mislead you when he says, ‘The Lord will deliver us.’ Have the gods of any nations ever delivered their lands from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? Who of all the gods of these countries have been able to save their lands from me? How then can the Lord deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”² This was a battle of the gods.

When a parent disciplines a child, after having brought about repentance, it is necessary to also bring about restoration. Discipline is not only about the pain of disobedience but also about the reunion of the heart. If discipline were only

¹ Isaiah 36:11–17

² Isaiah 36:18–20

about punishment, rebellion would be the result because of the pain suffered.

The Lord spent much effort trying to restore Israel. He also spent much energy punishing them. But He consistently came back saying, "Why are you continuing in this way? Come, let us reason together." God tried to restore them, but Israel would have none of it.

Return to Isaiah 2:2 which should now have more meaning. **"In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it."** Mountains are symbolic of religions having their own gods. Jehovah is going to be exalted above all other gods. God used this symbolism because Israel understood the concept. Each nation had its own mountain—its own religious system. So the mountain of our God is the higher mountain, meaning He is the superior God.

In the United States, the Senate building in Washington DC is called Capitol Hill. The symbolism is that Capitol Hill is where the laws of the land originate. Governance comes from The Hill, and the symbolism conforms to what God said in Isaiah. Unfortunately, people never make the connection.

Revelation 17:9 describes the heads of the beast of Revelation 13 as hills or mountains. It says that one of the heads had been wounded but the deadly wound had been healed. Why people have not been able to understand this is a mystery.

There are seven heads. This suggests seven of the same type of object. If one of the seven heads is a religious system like the Roman Catholic Church, the other six are likely the same type. I believe the seven are Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Islam, Eastern Mysticism, Heathenism, and Atheism.

I include atheism because it is a religious system that denies the existence of God. If you had a conversation with an atheist about their beliefs, it would be about religious issues. These

seven religions of the world encompass everyone on the planet. No one is free of religion.

The ten horns correspond to ten political powers that will rule over the planet. The horns are ten kings appointed by the devil (the Antichrist) when he physically rules the earth. The world will be divided into ten sectors overseen by these kings. Furthermore, they will give their loyalty and cooperation to the devil to accomplish what he intends to do.

It is easy to see in Isaiah 2:3 where the language of Revelation originates. Remember, Isaiah is about *Plan A*. **“Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”** Under *Plan B*, God is going to put His words and law in the hearts of the people so they don’t have to *go to the mountain to learn of the Lord*.

Plan A and *Plan B* have slight differences. Under *Plan A*, Jesus would have established His kingdom on earth and gradually brought people in from surrounding nations. In *Plan B*, Christ appears and speaks the nations out of existence suddenly by the sword that comes out of His mouth.¹

Under *Plan A*, Christ would have come as a babe, just as He did in *Plan B*, and He would have died for the penalty of the sins of the redeemed. The Father would have killed the Son in *Plan A*, just as He did in *Plan B*, but Israel would not have needed to cooperate in slaying the Messiah.

Jesus hung on a cross along with two criminals. In the normal course of events on a cross, it took three or four days to die, depending on the method used. The Roman soldiers went to break their legs that Friday to expedite death; the problem was, they would not have died by sundown; and the high priest wanted them dead and off their crosses so the Sabbath could be observed appropriately. However, the priest couldn’t kill

¹ Revelation 19:15

them; it was against Roman law. Those hanging had to die the unnatural death of crucifixion, so the priests and Romans agreed to a compromise: "Let's end this, break their legs." The priests were concerned about Christ and had to get Him down. When the soldiers approached Him though, He was already dead. This surprised them! To make absolutely sure, one of the soldiers pierced Him with a spear.

The sobering point of this is, it was the Father who took Jesus' life. Some say that Jesus gave His life. Yes, Jesus was willing—He agreed to die—but Jesus did not commit suicide on the cross. Similarly, Isaac was willing, but Abraham would have been the life-taker. Isaac could not have taken his own life because he was bound. Jesus was also restrained.

In John 10:17–18, Jesus said, **"I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."** Jesus willingly agreed to become the lamb, the sacrifice, the sacrament. No lamb ever took its own life on the altar. When Jesus died on Calvary, He died by the hand of the Father.

The reason for the story of Abraham and Isaac is to have a record of that test of faith. God wanted someone in the human race to understand what He himself would have to do. If, in the Garden of Gethsemane, after the angel's visit, Jesus could remember that Abraham and Isaac went through this, then perhaps, the story would be an encouragement to Him while going to the cross.

There is one extraordinary difference Isaac did not experience: Jesus died the second death. The significance of this is that if Jesus failed at any point, Jesus knew that He would not be resurrected—and neither would anyone else. Jesus knew that when the sins of the world were put upon Him, there was no turning back. Let me explain.

I know something about depression because I've had a chance to observe it. When a person is in a state of clinical depression their whole understanding of reality changes; and

unless you've been there, you can't appreciate that this state of being can be extraordinarily difficult. In one state, you are full of hope, happiness, and joy—full of life. In another, all of that is gone.

The Bible says Christ was made sin for us. The Father put the sins of the whole world upon Him. Christ entered an emotional state that He had never known. As this state swept over Jesus, He nearly died in the Garden of Gethsemane; however, the Father sent an angel to sustain Him until He went to Calvary.

Earlier, He had prophesied, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." He spoke this in His normal state. However, by the time Jesus entered Gethsemane and then Calvary, He was in a very different state of emotion. This is why He cried out on the cross in His last moments of existence. There was no hope, only doom. The second death was only moments away. In this abject state, he cried, "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit." There was nothing else He could do.

It is astonishing that the Creator—of life, the earth, and you and me—was willing to give up the privilege of eternal life so we could have the opportunity to live with Him forever. Christ went all the way to the second death at Calvary, although He personally had no sin for which to make restitution. Jesus does not condemn any person to the second death without having first been there. What a marvelous God!

It is imperative to understand: a) what Jesus went through, b) what He was willing to give up, and c) what extremity God went to make sure sin would not rise again. It was the only way salvation could be achieved. If there were some other way, surely God would have found it.

In God's wisdom and infinite understanding, this was the only way the sin problem could be dealt with so that His government, throughout eternity, would be unimpeachable. Had God destroyed Satan early on, it would have been impossible

for Him to appear guiltless to the universe.

Consider this analogy. Suppose you married your spouse in 1949. That same year, after a lengthy bout of negotiation, you agreed to have twelve children. You both foreknow that in 1997 your firstborn would become your enemy, but before that, this child will be your best friend. Also, suppose that you knew in advance this child was going to lead two of his brothers and one sister into rebellion, corrupting one-third of your household. Here are your choices:

1) Have no children. This would leave your home vacant.

2) Kill the child while he's still your best friend. But what will your other children think of you?

3) Kill the child when he begins to rebel because it will only get worse. Your other children will now suspect that disagreeing means death.

4) Write what will happen in advance so that you can reveal what you knew and yet allowed to take place.

This is what God has done. The whole story of sin was written in advance and will prove what God knew before anything came to be. It will demonstrate that God gave everyone the freedom of choice because in His government, freedom is the most essential right of every creature.

My point is that the Father has foreknowledge and based on that foreknowledge, He can reveal what He plans to do and how He plans to go about it. As we study and understand Him, our love and admiration should become more evident.

Had Israel taken the prophet's words to heart, they could have accomplished the will of God, proclaimed the gospel to the world, and avoided His terrible judgments. This is what Isaiah 2:2 is referring to.

At that ancient time, all altars were in the hills where they worshiped. The verse describes an evangelistic process in *Plan A* that would include all worshipers coming to the holy hills. When Jesus came, He would have established His kingdom and

continued to increase the nation's borders. He would have sent the Israelites to tell everyone everywhere of His coming and of His plans to end sin. Under *Plan A*, the plan of redemption would have taken many years. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel explained the process.

Under *Plan B*, this process is compressed into 1,335 days and the second coming happens suddenly. Satan will use this opportunity to impersonate Jesus. He will twist Old Testament prophecies to convince the people he is the fulfillment. Most Christians will be deceived because they still expect *Plan A* to happen.

Millions believe Christ will set up His kingdom on earth for a thousand years in Israel and rule from the temple in Jerusalem as *Plan A* specified. Then, all other nations will stream into Israel, just as they were supposed to under *Plan A*. When Satan impersonates Christ, it will appear to be what many expect because they are anticipating *Plan A*. His deception will be so convincing that even the very elect might be deceived.¹

Verse 4, “He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

God is speaking through Isaiah, giving Israel a glimpse of His plans. With this glimpse comes the offer: “Come now, be reasonable. Work with me.” God was saying to His people, “Your experience with me will be incredible if you only work with me. But if you rebel and do not recognize my sovereignty, then I will abandon you.”

Verses 5–9 say, **“Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord. You, Lord, have abandoned your people, the descendants of Jacob. They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and embrace pagan customs. Their land is full**

¹ Matthew 24:24

of silver and gold [riches]; there is no end to their treasures. Their land is full of horses; there is no end to their chariots [automobiles]. Their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made. So people will be brought low and everyone humbled—do not forgive them.”

Notice this statement. This is another glimpse of how God's kingdom would have been set up under *Plan A*. **“Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty! The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled and human pride brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.”**¹ This prophecy indicates that when God finally establishes His kingdom, man will not share the glory. God does not share His glory with man. Man can only appreciate and be awed by Him.

Notice what He said in verses 17–19: **“The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols will totally disappear. People will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.”**

Then verses 21–22, God says, **“They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from the fearful presence of the Lord and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. Stop trusting in mere humans, who have but a breath in their nostrils. Why hold them in esteem?”** This sounds similar to events in *Plan B*.

In Revelation 6, at the second coming, the sun turns dark during the sixth seal, the moon turns red, and the stars fall. There has already been a great earthquake; the mountains and islands have been moved out of their places. The rich and the poor, the free and the slave, look up and see Christ on the throne with the Father sitting beside Him, and say, “Hide us

¹ Isaiah 2:10–11

from their faces; rocks and mountains fall on us; hide us from the Lord.”

It is crucial we understand that *Plan A* and *Plan B* are not identical but do have parallels. They use many of the same elements and similar speech. People create insurmountable problems forcing details of *Plan A* onto *Plan B*. They don't realize the two plans are two thousand years apart, and *Plan A* will never happen!

Isaiah begins chapter 3, **“See now, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, is about to take from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support: all supplies of food and all supplies of water, the hero and the warrior, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder, the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor, skilled craftsman and clever enchanter.”**¹ God is saying, “I'm taking everything away from Jerusalem—everything!”

Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem the first time in 605 BC. In surrounding the city, he cut off its supply of food and water. When the city surrendered, he carried away its leaders; only the young and the old remained. Since Daniel and his friends were the sons of nobles, they were taken into captivity.

Verses 8–9, **“Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling; their words and deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence. The look on their faces testifies against them [they have no shame]; they parade [flaunt] their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves.”** This could be describing America today.

Verse 11, **“Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done.”** This describes the principle of restitution. Another reference that illustrates this principle is found in Revelation 18:6. Referring to Babylon: **“Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Pour her a double portion from her own cup.”**

¹ Isaiah 3:1–3

This is talking about judicial equilibrium. God is going to see restitution is made. Verse 7, **“Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.’”**

In Revelation 17:4: **“The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.”**

Revelation 18:24 reveals the contents of the cup. **“In her was found the blood of prophets and of God’s holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.”** This woman, this great harlot, represents Babylon. She has the blood of many prophets, saints, and martyrs in her cup. Because she has taken the lives of many, God is going to pay her back.

Let’s return to Isaiah.

Isaiah 3:12, **“Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. My people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path.”**

The guides are described in verse 14. **“The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: ‘It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses.’”**

Verses 15–16, **“‘What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?’ declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty. The Lord says, ‘The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, strutting along with swaying hips, with ornaments jingling on their ankles.’”** God is going to snatch all of this away.

Verses 18–26, **“In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, the earrings and bracelets and veils, the headdresses and anklets and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the**

signet rings and nose rings, the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls. Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, [there will be a mark] branding [them as slaves]. Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors in battle. The gates of Zion will lament and mourn; destitute, she will sit on the ground.”

God said in Isaiah, “Just as Israel has done, it will be done to her.” The golden rule is ironclad.¹ As you have done unto others, it will be done unto you. This is judicial equilibrium. You find this concept throughout the Bible.

¹ Galatians 6:7

CHAPTER 2



Prophets Get No Respect

In Isaiah 3, God was angry at Israel's apostasy. He was angry that the poor, homeless, and fatherless were so oppressed. By divine wisdom, He knew the only way to resolve this great social injustice was to bring complete destruction, cauterizing the growth of sin—like a surgeon would excise cancer to remove it—then starting over. So in Isaiah 4, God sent the prophet to the nation of Israel to explain why He must send destruction to the northern and southern kingdoms.

Isaiah 4:1 says, "In that day, there will be a great scarcity of men. Seven women will cling to one man, saying, 'Let us have your surname. We need a husband to remove the disgrace of being old maids.'" Women in Israel without a husband were of little value. Their plea was to have an identity. Apparently, in Israel's spiral into apostasy, the value of women went down correspondingly. A woman's primary value was to produce heirs, a sorry state for the nation of Israel.

God says, "I'm going to destroy the men of this nation. All

of you are worthless.” It is amazing how God proclaims and announces His judgments and yet, always announces hope as well. He weaves hope into His anger and redemption into His wrath.

In Isaiah 4, a prophecy is stated. **“In that day [of redemption] the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.”**¹

You must understand Old Testament imagery and language to appreciate what Isaiah said. When a tree is cut down and not completely removed, it will begin to sprout. God was using the imagery of a large tree. In the Old Testament, trees symbolized nations. A tree was alive, like a nation. Symbolically, when a lofty tree was cut down, it meant a nation had been toppled. In the story of redemption, a branch will sprout from the stump of the fallen nation, Israel.

Verse 4 refers to the ceremonial concept of a woman menstruating; this issue of blood was considered unclean. God forbade sex during this cycle, but Israel abandoned that regulation in their apostasy. Therefore, God was calling Israel accursed. However, He would take away their filth, evil, and guilt. God’s glory was to be a canopy, a shelter, a shade, a hiding place from trouble. These are allusions to Israel’s wilderness experience.

God protected Israel by being the shade between Himself and the sun. Even in this, there was the lesson of intercession—Jesus

¹ Isaiah 4:2–6

standing in the way, protecting, sustaining, and enabling His people. It is easy to affirm the love of God spoken of in the clearest and most beautiful terms in the Old Testament. The New Testament speaks of God's love. Jesus' death on Calvary certainly confirms that love. However, in terms of expressing love in a relationship, the Old Testament greatly exceeds the New Testament. Isaiah 5 is an example.

Chapter 5 deals with Jesus more than the Father. When I read in the Old Testament of God speaking, I find it usually refers to Jesus. He was the one dealing with Israel. One can see this throughout the Old and New Testaments. He was the angel of the Lord who led them out of Egypt; He was the one who was the cloud by day and the fire by night; He's the one speaking through Isaiah.

Isaiah 5:1–5: **“I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. ‘Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its [prickly] hedge [that keeps animals and people out], and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall [which has been me], and it will be trampled.’”**

God tells Israel, “I’m going to take away your hedge and destroy you.” Verses 6–8: **“I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briers and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.’ The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. Woe to you who add house to house**

and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land.” God is speaking of their insatiable greed. Stealing from the poor, the fatherless, and the homeless had become a way of life in Israel. It sounds very much like today.

In verses 11–13, God says through Isaiah, **“Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine. They have harps and lyres at their banquets, pipes and timbrels and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the Lord, no respect for the work of his hands. Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding; those of high rank will die of hunger and the common people will be parched with thirst.”**

Hosea 4:6 makes the same comment. Speaking on behalf of God, **“My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.”** A lack of understanding God’s ways; a lack of understanding the source of all blessings. It is no different today. Men think they acquire possessions through their own prowess and brilliance. How foolish. If the sustainer of life withdrew His blessings, mankind would disappear instantly.

In Isaiah 5:18–19, God says to Israel, **” Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit, and wickedness as with cart ropes, to those who say, ‘Let God hurry; let him hasten his work so we may see it. The plan of the Holy One of Israel—let it approach, let it come into view, so we may know it.’”** Isaiah made these prophecies one hundred twenty years before their Babylonian captivity. He started his ministry in 739 BC, which puts him about seventeen years before the fall of the northern kingdom. The people to whom Isaiah was speaking wanted proof God had sent him. **“Then we will know Isaiah, that you are a true prophet; that you really are speaking on behalf of God.”**

The problem is that a prophet speaks and predicts times that are not his own, creating a great dilemma. Noah preached his repetitious story for one hundred twenty years, **“God is going**

to destroy the earth with a flood.” But because it didn’t happen immediately, people become complacent, even rebellious.

Prophets generally get no respect until after the predicted event happens. Then, it is usually too late for the current generation to heed the prophet’s warnings. It is human nature to be distracted by the cares of life. Isaiah’s ministry began in his late teens and lasted sixty years. It was an exceptional burden to bear because saying and doing what God required was not popular. The Lord warned the people through Isaiah, but it did no good.

Isaiah 5:21–23 says, **“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.... who acquit the guilty for a bribe, but deny justice to the innocent.”** God is saying in plain English, “You cannot outrun or get around me; you must face me. Don’t think you can escape; you can’t protect yourself from me.”

Skip to Isaiah 5:25, **“Therefore the Lord’s anger burns against his people; his hand is raised and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.”** I want to raise a couple of points. Someone once said to me, “Larry, I don’t like reading the Old Testament because it’s always gloom and doom. It’s always destruction, always sad.

I asked this person, “How is that different than the evening news? If the news makes you sad, why do you watch it?” Their response was, “To keep up with what is happening in our world.”

I replied, “The Old Testament prophets were like the news today. They were telling what the world was like in their day.” God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. The behavior of mankind follows the same pattern. The rise and fall of twenty-one civilizations prove that. History appears to repeat because humans fail to learn its lessons.

In Old Testament times, when a king raised his hand, his servants would engage in a specific task until he lowered his hand. This sign was used on battlefields to execute maneuvers. In verse 25, the reference to mountains shaking and dead bodies lying in the streets is important. It sounds very much like Revelation 11:8, where the bodies of the two witnesses lie in the great city's streets, and people refuse them burial.

Revelation 11 borrows this concept from the Old Testament. It uses parallel language for easier understanding. Whenever God executes justice on rebellious people, the slain do not deserve the dignity of burial; their dead bodies are like refuse, and the birds come and eat their flesh.

I teach that the two witnesses are the Ten Commandments and the Holy Spirit. These two witnesses empower God's 144,000 servants worldwide as they proclaim the gospel. They are preaching the Word in the power of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit can torment a person grievously. He tormented Pilate's wife. She told Pilate to have nothing to do with Jesus because of her dream. The Holy Spirit distressed her. During the Great Tribulation, the Holy Spirit will trouble every heart not surrendered to the will of God. The Bible says, "There will be no peace, day or night, for those who rebel against God." This distress is the work of the Holy Spirit.

I want this next point to be clear. The Holy Spirit will be poured out on all people during the Great Tribulation when the 144,000 proclaim the gospel. Those in rebellion against God will have Holy Spirit influence, compelling and convicting them of their rebellion. The Holy Spirit will shout to every soul, "Prepare to meet God! Listen to His servants. Repent of your sins and worship the Creator who made heaven and earth. Come out of Babylon. Don't participate in the crisis government led by Lucifer. Do not submit to the authority of that satanic government."

This heart-rending work will be distressing for each person who rejects the Spirit. Nothing further can be done for

their salvation. The world has never experienced a situation as described in Revelation 11, so great will be the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The closest parallel happened at Pentecost when the disciples gathered in Jerusalem. Acts 2 is only a tiny parallel of what is coming.

I am bringing this to your attention because the 144,000 will disappear after finishing their work. When their 1,260 days of empowerment are over, they will run for their lives and hide in the remote places of the earth, like Elijah on Mount Carmel. One minute Elijah was full of the Spirit, boldly proclaiming God's Word. The next, he was without the Spirit, running from Jezebel, looking for a cave in which to hide. Elijah was the same man; the only difference was the power of the Spirit resting on him.

When the 144,000 have concluded their work, the offer of salvation has ended and the Holy Spirit has pressured everyone into a decision. God will then seal everyone in their condition. "He that is holy let him be holy still. He that is righteous, filthy, or unjust, let him remain that way—it is finished."¹

Afterward, the Spirit of God will be withdrawn from those who have rebelled. They have rejected the Holy Spirit, thus committing the unpardonable sin. Therefore, God will say, "I can do nothing further to save them. Leave them alone."

When the wicked commit the unpardonable sin and the Spirit withdraws, they will be relieved to have the nagging stop. Conversely, the Spirit will never leave the children of God. It dwells within them. This is why Jesus said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

* * * * *

Isaiah 5:26–30 says, "**He [God] lifts up a banner for the distant nations, he whistles for those at the ends of the earth. Here they come, swiftly and speedily! Not one of them grows tired or stumbles, not one slumbers or sleeps; not a belt is**

¹ Revelation 22:11

loosened at the waist, not a sandal strap is broken. Their arrows are sharp, all their bows are strung; their horses' hooves seem like flint, their chariot wheels like a whirlwind. Their roar is like that of the lion, they roar like young lions; they growl as they seize their prey and carry it off with no one to rescue. In that day they will roar over it [he's speaking of the nation of Israel] like the roaring of the sea. And if one looks at the land, there is only darkness and distress; even the sun will be darkened by clouds."

Isaiah pointed out that when God summons the nations to inflict His wrath upon Israel, nothing will stop their assault. Israel will not be able to fight back or survive, even though allied with other nations. It is difficult to convince a strong, well-defended nation that it is vulnerable. Today, the world regards the United States as a superpower. Most of its citizens believe their country is invincible. Alarmingly, the US is very much like Israel in Isaiah's time. However, God needs only summon distant nations to destroy it; no matter how mighty a nation, God can humble it—this includes the United States.

The fall of Babylon, the conquering of Medo-Persia, and the collapse of Rome were divine decrees, examples of how God works among nations. The principles by which He dealt with Israel have not changed. God is the same and His principles remain the same.

In Isaiah 6:1–3, Isaiah says, **"In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'"** Isaiah saw the same four living creatures that John saw in Revelation 4 and Ezekiel saw in Ezekiel 1.

Isaiah continues, **"At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with**

smoke. ‘Woe to me!’ I [Isaiah] cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my [Isaiah’s] mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I [Isaiah] said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’ He [the Lord] said, ‘Go and tell this people [what I want you to say].’”¹

Isaiah encountered the Lord in these verses, and his sense of unworthiness as a sinner is overwhelming; not only for his own guilt but also for the guilt of his people. Isaiah was panicked for his very life. He thought he would die because he had seen the Lord Almighty. He understood that a man would perish if he saw God. When Moses wanted to see God, God forbade it.

Then one of the four living creatures took a lump of coal from the altar of incense, touched Isaiah’s lips, and said, “**Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.**”

I want to make a point. If something is sterile and I touch it, it becomes contaminated. In the sanctuary service, the opposite happened, what was contaminated became pure. This is an illustration of God’s power. When God touches something, it becomes holy. When the angel brought the coal to Isaiah and touched his lips, he was, in effect, making Isaiah pure. This illustrates what will happen to the 144,000 during the Great Tribulation.

Before the Great Tribulation begins, God will select them, appear to them, and seal them. This *sealing* is the full imparting of the righteousness of Christ within them. Just as Ezekiel was given the little book to eat, and Isaiah had the burning coal touch his lips, the 144,000 will be given the *Word* to eat. As

¹ Isaiah 6:4–9

Isaiah saw, they will be sealed, their guilt taken away, and their sins atoned for. As firstfruits, the 144,000 are samples of what is coming to those who receive salvation.

In Isaiah 6:9–10, God sent Isaiah to His people to say: **“Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”**

This sounds like a stern benediction, but God was saying, “When you preach gospel truth in the power of the Spirit to those rejecting it, it forces either submission or rebellion. There is no middle ground.”

God told Isaiah, “Go, speak to this people and make their hearts calloused. Make their ears dull. Proclaim my message, then those with ears will turn and be healed. Unfortunately, the others will seal their fate and go to destruction.”

Isaiah asked, “How long must I do this, Lord?” In verse 11, God answered him, **“Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the Lord has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”** Even though the Lord utterly forsakes the land, there is redemption.

In Isaiah 7, an interesting development occurs, and quite a story goes with it. Isaiah 7:1 begins, **“When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it.”**

This is describing a battle, brother against brother. The two southern tribes were called Judah, and the ten northern tribes were called Israel. Remaliah was king of the northern tribes

and Pekah was his son. King Rezin of Aram and Pekah joined to capture Jerusalem but could not conquer the city.

Isaiah 7:2–9, **“Now the house of David was told, ‘Aram has allied itself with Ephraim’; so the hearts of Ahaz [king in Jerusalem] and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind. Then the Lord said to Isaiah, ‘Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer’s Field. Say to him, “Be careful, keep calm and don’t be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood [an eloquent way of saying, “These two guys are finished.”]—because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah’s son have plotted your ruin, saying, ‘Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it.’ Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘It will not take place, it will not happen, for the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is only Rezin. Within sixty-five years [of this prophecy] Ephraim [the ten northern tribes of Israel] will be too shattered to be a people. The head of Ephraim [its capital] is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah’s son. [Isaiah says to King Ahaz,] If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.’”**

God’s purpose for Judah had not been fulfilled. Until God permitted, Jerusalem would not fall into the hands of invaders. God was saying through Isaiah that within sixty-five years, Ephraim, the tribal nations to the north, would be too shattered to be a people. It turned out to be only fifteen years. In 722, Shalmaneser V finally brought an end to the ten northern tribes of Israel. They were eliminated. Some Bible commentators talk about the ten lost tribes. That is an incorrect definition. The Bible is quite clear, the ten tribes were not lost—they were destroyed.

In this paragraph, don’t confuse King Ahab and King Ahaz.

Ahab and Jezebel lived 100 years earlier, around 853 BC. King Ahaz ruled in Jerusalem 130 years later, in 722 BC. The Lord wanted to encourage King Ahaz. At the time, the two southern tribes of the kingdom of Judah had not entirely apostatized. There was still hope. There was still loyalty and devotion to God. The Lord, wishing to encourage King Ahaz, said something that has confused many people.

The Lord spoke to Ahaz in Isaiah 7:11–25, “**Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.**”

But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.’

Then Isaiah said, ‘Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your Father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria.’

In that day the Lord will whistle for flies from the Nile delta in Egypt and for bees from the land of Assyria. They will all come and settle in the steep ravines and in the crevices in the rocks, on all the thornbushes and at all the water holes. In that day the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria—to shave your head and private parts, and to cut off your beard also. [It was the custom of the victor to humiliate the defeated by body-shaving them before executing them. Shaving a man was the equivalent of saying he was impotent, a eunuch, powerless.] In that day, a person will keep alive a young cow and

two goats. And because of the abundance of the milk they give, there will be curds to eat. All who remain in the land will eat curds and honey. In that day, in every place where there were a thousand vines worth a thousand silver shekels, there will be only briars and thorns. Hunters will go there with bow and arrow, for the land will be covered with briars and thorns. As for all the hills once cultivated by the hoe, you will no longer go there for fear of the briars and thorns; they will become places where cattle are turned loose and where sheep run.”

This prophecy in Isaiah 7 may be understood in one of two ways. God wanted to give King Ahaz a sign that the virgin would be with child. This is a contradiction in terms. How can a virgin be pregnant?

Because Immanuel means *God with us*, I understand that had Ahaz and the southern kingdom of Judah been willing to cooperate with God, Jesus could have been born 700 years earlier than 4 BC. I believe the sign the Lord wanted to give Ahaz was the birth of Christ. “The virgin will be with child and give birth to a son.” God is with us. “He, the redeemer, the messiah, will eat curds and honey when He knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right.” By the time He reaches the age of accountability, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. Allowing for 65 years, although it turned out to be only 15 years, the two kings were destroyed.

The promise to Ahaz was that the Lord would bring a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah. He would bring the king of Assyria to punish Israel for their insolence and rebellion and then bring an end to Assyria. Afterward, everyone would enjoy the curds and honey. But the king refused to live by faith so the sign was not provided at that time.

Then, in Isaiah 8:1–4, **“The Lord said to me [Isaiah], ‘Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.’ So I called in Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah as reliable witnesses for**

me. Then I made love to the prophetess [my wife], and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the Lord said to me, ‘Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. [The Lord will use Isaiah’s son to make the point instead of the virgin giving birth.] For before the boy knows how to say “My father” or “My mother;” [before the boy can speak] the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.’” The Lord decreed it. And in 722 BC, 15 years later, it happened.

In Isaiah 8:5–6, **“The Lord spoke to me [Isaiah] again: ‘Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah.’”** These two men have allied to protect themselves. Shiloah was referenced because it was a significant place. The pool at Siloam (Shiloah) was where Jesus later healed a blind man by putting mud on his eyes and sending him to the pool to wash. Also, the Tabernacle was kept at Shiloah for a time before moving into Jerusalem. Continuing with Isaiah 8:7, **“Therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the [river] Euphrates—the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks.”**

In Old Testament times, a flood would sweep through a town and wipe it out, destroying everything in its path. This is why four angels are loosed in the sixth trumpet at the great river Euphrates. During the sixth bowl, the great river Euphrates will be dried up. The significance of the river is important. In ancient times, the Euphrates was the northern boundary for Israel. It was to serve as a natural boundary preventing the kingdoms of the north from coming south.

A river is a double-edged sword. If an army had to cross a river to attack an adversary, the river was the place you died in retreat if the adversary was not defeated. The winning army chased the defeated one to the river and annihilated them.

God designed a geographically protected location for Israel. The Euphrates River would be the northern boundary; the Red

Sea would be the southern boundary; the eastern border the Arabian Desert; the western border the Mediterranean Sea. But natural boundaries are not necessarily everlasting.

God was saying He would bring the king of Assyria across the river like a mighty flood that sweeps into Judah, verse 8, **“Swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, Immanuel!”**

In Revelation 9, “The four angels, loosed at the river Euphrates, go forward in the sixth trumpet and kill a third of mankind.” This is talking about the global destruction of human beings. God will allow the Antichrist—the devil physically masquerading as almighty God—to send his armies throughout the world to take control. Just as God sent the king of Assyria in the previous paragraph into Israel to wipe it out, the parallel in Revelation is identical.

God is likening the king of Assyria to the mighty flood waters of the river Euphrates. Verses 9–12, **“Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered! Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us. [You’re not going to win.] This is what the Lord says to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people: ‘Do not call conspiracy everything this people calls a conspiracy.’”**

So the Lord puts His strong hand on Isaiah and says, “[Look Isaiah, do not fear what these people fear and do not dread what they dread.] **The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread. [From God’s hands, all things exist and have their being.] He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. Many of them will stumble; they will fall**

and be broken, they will be snared and captured.”¹

Throughout Isaiah’s life, God repeatedly tried to communicate to Israel: destruction and redemption, punishment and restoration. He explained why discipline was necessary and offered hope that His purposes would ultimately be accomplished. This teaches that nations, as well as individuals, could pass a point where repentance is no longer possible. Once that point is reached, all that remains are God’s dreadful judgments. Isaiah was telling Israel it had passed the point of redemption. God could not do anything for them. He was about to destroy Israel and informed King Ahaz that Judah was next unless they straightened up. Judah had a chance, but alas, the nation did not respond.

God said to Isaiah, **“Bind up this testimony of warning [the Ten Commandments] and seal up God’s instruction [the book of Moses] among my disciples. [Isaiah then declared] I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob. I will put my trust in him.”²** God would preserve a few people, like Nehemiah and Ezra, with the knowledge and understanding of His ways, purposes, and plans so these witnesses could share what God was attempting to do when restoration occurred.

The Babylonian captivity would last 70 years! Very few would see both ends of their captivity. Those who went into captivity would be too old to make the trip back to the Promised Land at the time of restoration. God says, “Even though you’re going into captivity, I want to preserve the knowledge of my purpose and intentions, and what has happened and why.”

Verse 18, **“Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.”** God said, “There is going to be a time when I bring about restoration, and the people who hear my voice will respond.”

¹ Isaiah 8:12–15

² Isaiah 8:16–17

Verse 19, **“When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?”** Solomon had written years earlier, “The dead know nothing.”

Verse 20, **“Consult God’s instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”** Many were preaching “the Word of the Lord,” but it does not measure up to the gold standard of truth—God’s law. This problem is no different today. His law, also called the testimony, refers to the Ten Commandments, and instruction refers to the book of Moses. God was saying, “Isaiah, if they don’t line up with what Moses wrote and I plainly stated in the Ten Commandments, these preachers are false.”

Verse 21, **“Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God.”** God’s anger is directed at both the political and religious leaders. After God made such strident remarks about the condition of His people, He gave hope.

Isaiah 9:1 continues, **“Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali [two of the northern tribes God humbled by destroying them], but in the future he will honor [that same territory] Galilee of the [Gentile] nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—”** Isn’t that interesting? The land that had been purged of His people will be a land honored. How will this honor come?

Verse 2 says, **“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”** Verses 3–5 promise a Messiah will come, the Savior who will restore and lead the people to accomplish all that was initially intended.

Isaiah 9:6–7, **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,**

and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

This happened around 720 BC. Ahaz had rejected the sign of the Lord. So the Lord instructed Isaiah to have a child with his wife and give the child a specific name to symbolize what God was about to do to Israel. God said, "Instead of a savior—a messianic being, I am going to give you someone with a name that symbolizes destruction."

To find a government official who is righteous and has the wisdom to deal fairly is what verse 7 is discussing. The see-saw of hope and despair in the book of Isaiah is so telling. It reveals how God's love, plans, and interest in man are so intense, yet, people wander away because of ignorance, stupidity, and darkness. God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." It is identical today. Our country has fallen so far from the ways of God.

In chapter 9, the Lord said through Isaiah, "Even though you are going into captivity to be punished, at an appointed time, I will honor Galilee because a great light will come out of Galilee.

In Isaiah 9:14–16, Isaiah says, "**So the Lord will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day; the elders and dignitaries are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail. Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray.**" There you have it: The head is the politicians, and the tail is the preachers!

Verses 17–19, "**Therefore the Lord will take no pleasure in the young men, nor will he pity the fatherless and widows, for everyone is ungodly and wicked, every mouth speaks**

folly. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised. Surely wickedness burns like a fire; it consumes briars and thorns, it sets the forest thickets ablaze, so that it rolls upward in a column of smoke. By the wrath of the Lord Almighty the land will be scorched and the people will be fuel for the fire; they will not spare one another.”

This is a clue for understanding Revelation 8:7. When the first trumpet sounds and the fiery meteoric showers fall upon the earth, everyone will rightly conclude that the wrath of God has broken out upon the land.

Verses 20–21, “On the right they will devour, but still be hungry; on the left they will eat, but not be satisfied. Each will feed on the flesh of their own offspring: Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, and Ephraim on Manasseh; together they will turn against Judah. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.”

In Isaiah 10, God uses the Assyrians as an instrument of His wrath against Israel and Judah. He then spans Assyria by sending the Babylonians against them. Later, God deals with the Babylonians by sending the Medes and Persians to defeat them. When one nation’s cup of iniquity is full, God sends His wrath to destroy in whatever form He chooses. Whether by fire from the sky or war with another nation, God is capable and takes care of business. This is an important concept to understand. God’s patience has a limit, and when that limit is reached, nothing can prevent the execution of His wrath.

In writing this, I hope to engage you and provide you with an introductory way to study and spend time in your Bible, learning of the truths, promises, and ways of God. May God bless and keep you as you continue to study His Word and seek His wisdom in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3



The North & The South

Before delving into Isaiah 10, I want to mention two points concerning the Old Testament prophets which must be understood. First, God has to be careful about how he reveals prophecy because it pertains to the future. If God were not careful, people would misconstrue His words as fatalism meaning, whatever will be will be or that His plans cannot be thwarted. Second, the idea that what we do doesn't matter. This implies we can live like hell on earth and still go to heaven or, we can live like heaven on earth and still go to hell. Both rationales allow us to do whatever we want because tomorrow is predetermined; we have no control. That is a problem for many Christians.

There is a lack of understanding about the ways of God, so He is careful when revealing what He intends to do. There is an ongoing cause-and-effect relationship. Somehow, people must be able to make a choice that will determine their future. The human heart doesn't catch on quickly or retain what it has learned. Attention spans are short. As we look at the Old

Testament prophets and examine what God intended to do, it must be understood within the context of the relationship God insisted upon between Himself and His creation.

Everything God creates, He is responsible for. He has a relationship with us whether we like it or not. God also has placed responsibility and accountability upon us. What we think about it is immaterial. This applied to the Assyrians, Egyptians, and Moabites who denied the presence and sovereignty of God. That is why God's actions and behavior cannot correctly be understood unless seen from a broad view.

Examining Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah chapter by chapter will bring out the big picture, so I implore you to patiently persevere in understanding how God's plans prevail. On the one hand, the Bible gives us a view from God's all-seeing eye. In Daniel 5, God had Daniel inform Belshazzar he had been *weighed in the balance* and found short. That night, the God of heaven brought about the fall of the Babylonian Empire. Now, if we were to ask secular historians why the Babylon Empire fell, they would chronicle the collapse based on the prowess of Cyrus and Darius. Their view would be limited to human effort and scheming. But if we could pull the curtain back and see God's involvement, we would be astonished at what He is doing in our lives.

God has to be careful about how He presents prophecy so we don't end up with a fatalistic view of the world and the future. We need the insight only the Bible can offer. How is God dealing with the issues of life? Someone reading this may have financial or health issues, or even problems in a relationship they're trying to sort out: "Where is God in all of this?" The Old Testament reiterates that nothing escapes God's attention. He knows every detail about all things.

Isaiah 10:1-4, **"Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the**

fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, his [God's] anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised."

God promised in Isaiah 9 to punish Israel and Judah. In chapter 10, verse 5, He did this with His rod of anger. **"Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath!"** The Assyrian was a heathen, a pagan, an outsider in the sense he didn't know the God of Israel. And yet, God would use the king of Assyria as the club of His wrath to punish Israel.

Verses 6–7, **"I send him against [Israel] a godless nation, I dispatch him against a people who anger me, to seize loot and snatch plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets. But this is not what he intends, this is not what he has in mind; his purpose is to destroy, to put an end to many nations."** The king of Assyria did not have God's will in mind; he had his own goals. But the Lord would use the king's ambition to punish Israel. Verse 8, **"'Are not my commanders all kings?' he [the Assyrian king] says."** Satan was moving the Assyria king, arousing his arrogance and greed.

In chapter 5, the Lord, speaking of Israel, would remove His hedge of protection and empower the king of Assyria to do whatever he felt like doing to them—a punishment scenario. Israel had so angered God that it was time for discipline. This is an important lesson every Christian needs to learn: kindness has its limits, contrary to what Christianity teaches today.

The expulsion of Lucifer from heaven is proof of this principle. There came a time when God said, "I won't take this anymore. I'm not putting up with your rebellion." The flood in Noah's day and Sodom and Gomorrah were other instances of how kindness, forgiveness, and patience have limits. Once that line is reached where God's patience and mercy no longer have

any redeeming effect, the hammer drops.

Parents do this with their kids. They encourage them, train them, admonish them, and finally get to the point where, no matter how kind or educated they are, the child needs to be disciplined to show there is responsibility, accountability, and punishment for inappropriate behavior. In a parent-child situation, the child may not want a relationship, but the parent will have one, one way or another. In a similar way, we may not know God or think of serving Him, but He still has a relationship with us. He made us, sustains us, and holds us accountable. Israel had become so recalcitrant, hardhearted, and arrogant that God said, “I’m going to send the king of Assyria against this Godless nation.”

Isaiah 10:12, **“When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, ‘I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes.’”** God was dealing with Israel through the king of Assyria for problems incumbent upon all mankind. We are all cursed with it—especially if you’re a politician. Politicians take credit for every good thing under the sun and blame someone else for all the bad.

In verse 17, the Lord declared that He would utterly destroy Israel through a sequence of events. He would use Assyria to punish Israel, Babylon to punish Assyria, and the Medes and Persians to punish Babylon. God set up those kingdoms and He took them down.

In verses 21–23, the Lord made a promise. One aspect of God’s discipline is that He always offers optimism: **“A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. Though your people be like the sand by the sea, Israel, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous. The Lord, the Lord Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land.”**

When the time comes for the destruction of the United States and the rest of the world, it will take place. It has been

decreed! I believe the decree to destroy the entire earth was executed in heaven's court in 1994. We are now living on borrowed time, waiting for the sealing of the 144,000. I believe the seven angels were given the seven trumpets of Revelation 8:2 in 1994. In Revelation 7, Jesus tells them to "Wait, hold back until the 144,000 are sealed." And when they are, the Great Tribulation will commence. Yet, until that time comes, God tarries.

We see a parallel in the history of Israel. At the end of the seventy weeks, even though Israel had refused to accept the Messiah, God did not immediately destroy Jerusalem in AD 34. Instead, He waited thirty-five years to give the Christian faith time to mature, extricate itself from Judaism, and spread into the world before destroying Jerusalem. The apostle Paul led in this mission work which allowed Christianity to flourish.

In a similar way, the date for Earth's destruction has arrived. God could finish the sealing of the 144,000 at any moment. It is only by divine mercy that we have a delay. The best one can do is cooperate with God. God will fully reveal His sovereignty. He has the power of life and death, and I would trust Him with that power over anyone else.

In Isaiah 11:1, we return to the hope and promise of restitution and restoration. **"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit."** Verses 10–11, **"In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people from Assyria."** God was about to bring destruction upon Israel. Yet, He still asserted the promise that the Messiah would come through Israel. The root of Jesse was what the branch—the little shoot coming out of the stump—signified.

Verses 12–13, **"He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth. Ephraim's**

jealousy will vanish, and Judah's enemies will be destroyed; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, nor Judah hostile toward Ephraim." This refers to the anger and hostility between the ten tribes in the north and the two in the south.

Verses 15–16, **"The Lord will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River. He will break it up into seven streams so that anyone can cross over in sandals. There will be a highway for the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt."** God is alluding to a future time when He will establish His kingdom on earth. God's people from all nations will stream into the Holy City. He will gather spiritual (not biological) Jews from the four corners of the planet.

Verse 10 talks about the root of Jesse standing as a banner. Let me explain. In ancient times, each nation had its own flag. We do this today. The flags of Canada, Mexico, and the United States are very distinct flags. In ancient times, flags were called banners.

Whenever nations allied to fight or defend themselves from a larger enemy, they fought under banners since they didn't know each other or, sometimes, even speak the same language. For example, if the Jews allied with Egypt, the Egyptians would fly the Egyptian flag, the Jews would fly the Jewish flag, and during the battle, both would fly a *unique* flag so each army would know they were on the same team. As you can imagine, if many nations were allied, it could quickly become confusing.

In the story of Gideon, when the Midianites were startled in the night, saw the lights, and heard trumpets sounding, confusion and fighting broke out. Everyone went crazy because they didn't know each other and couldn't see the banners. The importance of a flag cannot be understated. Each of the twelve tribes had its own banner.

God was talking about a time in the future when **"The Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples [plural]; the**

nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.” We are not talking just about biological Israel. That is the point where scholars get confused. God is reaching out much farther to reclaim the spiritual remnant of His people.

God would scatter Israel, punish them, take them into Babylonian captivity, and then restore them. Artaxerxes would give a decree in 457 BC—300 years in the future—to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, allowing Israel to return in the first *returning*. This return is not under the banner of the root of Jesse though. This return is under the banner of Zerubbabel. In verses 10–11, God talks about the second returning.

Because of the Babylonian captivity, the children of Israel were going to be scattered. Many would choose to make their homes in remote parts of the world, never to return to Jerusalem. The diaspora is a dispersion, so Israel would never be cloistered within Jerusalem again. God was going to bring back a remnant from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem. But ultimately, when Jesus came at the end of the 70 weeks (*Plan A*) to set up His kingdom, He would gather His children out of all the nations. All who had been scattered would once again be under one banner.

In verse 15, **“The Lord will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea [in the south]; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River [in the north].”** In *Plan A*, God was making it easy for all who wanted to be under his banner to come. During the Great Tribulation, He will do the same.

To refresh our minds about the backstory: Isaiah lived around 720 BC, and Shalmaneser had destroyed the ten tribes of Ephraim several years earlier in 722 BC. Two hundred seventy-five years earlier, King David ruled Israel in 1000 BC. Israel had filled its cup of iniquity to the level that God would destroy them using the king of Assyria. The apostasy of Judah was not yet total but well underway. This destruction was symbolized as the *chopping down* of a great cedar tree. Cedars are notorious for enduring drought and resisting disease, so

they are hard to kill. This symbolism referred to the toppling of a nation. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, he was a great tree. The Lord chopped him off and put a band around his stump, indicating the tree would, one day, be used again.

Isaiah discussed the forthcoming captivity in enough detail to know that God was moving. In chapter 11, Isaiah talked about gathering people under the banner of the root of Jesse. He was speaking about the birth of the Messiah.

There was no second coming in God's original plan, *Plan A*. Even though God knows the future, He does not operate on foreknowledge. Yes, He knew the generation that came out of Egypt would die in the wilderness, but He still gave them a chance to live, make choices, and be all they could be. Free will is hard to accept and understand, and one can only do it by faith.

When I was a boy, I would ask my dad if I could go swimming with my friends. He would say, "I'm not letting you go swimming until you know how!" But how do we know what we can do, when we're not allowed to find out?

God offers us the opportunity to succeed or fail. That is what being *free to choose* means. When you're free and have liberty, you can choose rebellion or submission, even though God knows your decision beforehand. He must allow us the opportunity to make that decision so that we can say either "I made the right decision" or "I messed up." If God were to say, "I know you're going to mess up," we human beings would constantly be thinking, "But I might not have messed up." So, in love and fairness, He lets us experience the rewards or consequences of our decisions. God is just as interested in the process of life as in the outcome. If we're willing to let Him lead, He can take us wherever He wants.

Some parents impose high goals on their children with the expectation it will drive the child to succeed. Some call this parenting; others call it training. It is called by many terms to cloak what is little more than slavery. Then, suddenly, Junior

reaches adulthood and is expected to function, make choices, and behave as an adult even though he's never had to make any meaningful decisions.

When I worked for a Christian college many years ago, I witnessed this issue more than you would think. Kids had their lives mapped out by their parents, only to leave for academy and discover a world they knew nothing about. Moreover, they realized they had no interest in becoming what their parents wanted them to be. It was a most agonizing experience for parents as well as for the children.

Likewise, God knows us and has objectives higher than the highest human thought if He could only get us there. He however is not going to impose it on us. God says, "Look, if you don't choose it, you won't have it. But you can't rightly choose something you don't understand, so I'll teach you." The Lord is constantly working to bring us into understanding. This was true of Israel. He led that first generation out of Egypt into the wilderness, intending to lead them into the Promised Land within twenty-four months. When Moses was told to send in the twelve spies, God was ready to go forward. But ten spies gave a poor report, while Caleb and Joshua gave a faithful one. The result was the whole population remained in the desert for forty years.

The numbers 'ten and two' are an interesting parallel because the nation of Israel eventually divided into ten tribes in the north and two in the south. God was saying, "Okay, this is a dead-end street. We have to start over. Therefore, I will send them out of the land for seventy years—thirty years longer than they had to stay in the desert—then bring them back home again. And yet, even after this, Israel's rebellion prevailed.

Then, God gave Israel one final opportunity to accept Him as their King. He gave them 490 years (70 weeks) to get their act together. He sent the Messiah, and with Messiah aboard, He wanted to end sin in the world, bringing in everlasting

righteousness so eternal life could begin.¹

Isaiah 12:2, **“Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.”** God gave a clue about a great highway that would have made it easy for His children to come home. Unfortunately, this didn’t happen in *Plan A* because of apostasy.

* * * * *

During the Great Tribulation, God will make salvation attainable to anyone who allows the Holy Spirit to influence their heart. The nature of religion is to say, “This is the right way; all others are wrong.” It is the nature of religion to become so exclusive that no one can truly know God until they agree with our beliefs. God is going to crush that entire mindset in the coming great tribulation. God will show the world that people in every religious system can receive salvation on His terms once they know what those terms are. The 144,000 will present the message so clearly it will shatter all religious paradigms.

That message is, “Will you worship the Creator as He demands?” How individuals have thought about religion, God, and what is right and wrong will change. The Great Tribulation will force everyone to consider these pressing issues because everything around them will be torn down.

In Isaiah 13, God gave a prophecy concerning Babylon. This was important because Babylon would be the rod of God’s anger for punishing the Assyrians. Incidentally, the Babylonians would serve as the rod of God’s anger in dealing with the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah.

Notice how the verse starts with raising a banner, a call to war. **“Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them to enter the gates of the nobles. I have commanded those I prepared for battle; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath—those who rejoice in my triumph.”**² The

¹ Daniel 9

² Isaiah 13:2-3

significance of a bare hilltop is that the flag can be seen from any direction—it is obvious.

“Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The Lord Almighty is mustering an army for war. They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens—the Lord and the weapons of his wrath—to destroy the whole country. Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every heart will melt with fear. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”¹

Similar language was used in Joel 2, which leaves the same mental picture. Both describe a war between Christ and Satan that the Almighty would have initiated under *Plan A*—Christ and His followers against Gog and Magog. Under *Plan A*, the wicked would have been annihilated. The same will happen under *Plan B*. The only difference is 3,000 years of elapsed time until *Plan B*. It is the same war, though.

In Revelation 19, John describes Jesus coming on a white horse with the armies of heaven following close behind. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword to strike down the nations. This is a mental picture of the second coming. John sees an angel as bright as the sun who calls the birds to come and gorge themselves on flesh left by the carnage.

We read in Revelation 17 how the kings of earth war against

¹ Isaiah 13:4–11

the rider on the horse. This describes a contest in *Plan B*. At the second coming, the world's armies will align against the coming Christ, attempting to destroy Him with whatever weapons of war are available. Man is going to futilely fight against His maker.

Then, at the end of the 1,000 years, the resurrected wicked will attempt to take the holy city from the redeemed when the holy city descends. This is the same war that would have taken place in *Plan A*. God takes full responsibility for its punishment and execution. The day of the Lord will be cruel: a day of wrath, fierce anger, and bloodshed from one end of the earth to the other.

Under *Plan A*, if Israel had accepted Him, Messiah would have established His presence on earth and made Jerusalem the center of His government. Afterward, He would have sent missionaries, equivalent to the 144,000, worldwide with the message, "Come to the city of Jerusalem and be saved, for I am about to destroy the earth."

Jerusalem would have been another ark. God would have sent the twelve tribes to gather His children into Jerusalem. He would have dried up the rivers so there would be no impediment, no natural boundary to prevent people from arriving there. Then, as we see in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, He would have brought those left behind—Gog and Magog—against Jerusalem. Under *Plan A*, this is when God would have brought fire down from the sky, burned them up, and purified the world.

At this time, God had moved from the 'one man, one message' scenario to the 'one family, one message' scenario. And He wanted to use the family of Abraham. In the days of Noah, everyone lived close geographically. Nations were not diverse and scattered throughout the world because it had not yet been pulled apart. The Tower of Babel and the confusion of languages did not exist, so the 'one man, one message' of Noah's day was appropriate.

In AD 34, nations, continents, and people all around the

globe still needed to be reached. Christ came to establish His kingdom and begin that process until the time came to grant immortality to the redeemed and destroy the wicked.

In *Plan A*, He would have empowered missionaries and sent them to places like Australia, America, Europe, Russia, and China.

He said in Isaiah 13:11, **“I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.”** This verse is not talking about a local event. Verse 13, **“Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of his burning anger.”**

Some tell me they cannot conceive of a God of love being angry enough to kill anybody, but their concept of God is incorrect. That view is not based on what the Bible teaches. In Noah’s day, they could not conceive of a flood or believe the message of destruction. Then reality stuck! Sincerely believing something doesn’t make it true.

The prophecy of Isaiah 13 focused on the Babylonians. Before God directly addressed their nation, verses 1–16 state what He would ultimately do.

Starting in verse 17, He addressed them directly. **“See, I will stir up against them [the Babylonians] the Medes, who do not care for silver and have no delight in gold.”** This means the Medes didn’t want the booty; they wanted power and would show no mercy. The Babylonians would be brought down for their arrogance.

Verses 19–22, **“Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the pride and glory of the Babylonians, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited or lived in through all generations; there no nomads will pitch their tents, there no shepherds will rest their flocks. But desert creatures will lie there, jackals will fill her houses;**

there the owls will dwell, and there the wild goats will leap about. Hyenas will inhabit her strongholds, jackals her luxurious palaces. Her time is at hand, and her days will not be prolonged.”

Babylon, that marvelous city—one of the ancient wonders of the world, the great pride of Nebuchadnezzar, the crown jewel of the kingdoms of the earth—became the deserted haunt of jackals and owls.

No matter how mighty the United States Government may think it is, no matter how great and powerful it may think of itself, God needs only to speak the word and it will become a desert. America’s time will come. I only wonder which country God will use to destroy it.

Chapter 14 gives insight as to what motivated Babylon. Isaiah was speaking for God, saying, **“The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land.”**¹ God sometimes had to speak in parables to help people understand. He was talking about restoration to the land after He made them leave for a time-out. Furthermore, other peoples (aliens) would join Israel and unite with the house of Jacob.

In *Plan A*, God was going to send His servants out into the world. Aliens would come from all nations to be part of Israel so that God’s people would be united in one place. God intended to use the Israelites as His mouthpiece, declaring that salvation was open to all.

“On the day the Lord gives you relief from your suffering and turmoil and from the harsh labor forced on you, you will take up this taunt against the [real] king of Babylon:”²

I inserted the word *real* because the earthly king was just a ‘chip off the old block’, doing what came naturally. The next verse (verse 12) describes who is really behind their suffering and turmoil.

¹ Isaiah 14:1

² Isaiah 14:3–4

“How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit [the grave]. Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: ‘Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?’”¹

These texts describe the expulsion of Lucifer from heaven. It sounds like what the people inside the holy city might be seeing. This holy city scenario would have happened in *Plan A*, just as it will happen in *Plan B*. The term “would not let his captives go home” means this is a particularly mean king exacting overt cruelty. Finally, after gaining control of their kingdoms, Cyrus, Artaxerxes, and Darius issued decrees allowing prisoners to return to their homelands.

The passage would have been fulfilled in *Plan A*. The Old Testament prophets don’t know about *Plan B*. We understand there are two plans only because we live under *Plan B*. To put this in perspective, we must wear the sandals of Isaiah.

From Chapter 13, we learned God would bring punishment upon Babylon. In Chapter 14, He intended to show compassion for Jacob and return His people to their land. In both *Plan A* and *Plan B*, the real king of Babylon is the Devil—Satan.

In Revelation 13, when people worship the beast, they also worship the Dragon who gives it its power. Christ calls Satan the prince of this world for a fundamental reason, he is the ruler of the kingdom of darkness and has that authority and power.

¹ Isaiah 14:12–17

Isaiah 14:4 introduces a taunt the redeemed would utter. This sounds odd because we're taught as children not to ridicule others. But notice what the Bible says: **"How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended!"**

God believes in judicial equilibrium. We get what we sow. **"The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression. All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing. Even the junipers [pine trees] and the cedars of Lebanon gloat over you and say, 'Now that you [O king of Babylon] have been laid low, no one comes to cut us down.' The realm of the dead below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you—all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones—all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond, they will say to you, 'You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us.' All your pomp has been brought down to the grave, along with the noise of your harps; maggots are spread out beneath you and worms cover you. How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn!"**¹ We will continue Isaiah 14 in the next chapter.

¹ Isaiah 14:5–12

CHAPTER 4



What God Intended

This chapter begins with the derivation of the Devil. Besides the book of Job, Isaiah is the first book in the Bible to say anything about the Devil's origin and work in detail.

It is generally believed that Moses wrote the Book of Job and lived about 700 years before Isaiah. This would have been approximately 2,600 years after creation. Isaiah began his ministry around 739 BC, so from what Isaiah writes, we are learning 3,300 years of previously unknown information about Satan's history.

Why are there no clear statements about the origin of the adversary of man, the means through which he works, or the evil that lurks in spiritual places? Why do we have no information on Lucifer until Isaiah?

In antediluvian days, history was shared orally. And up to the time of Noah, there were people who actually lived at the *fall of man*. For example, Adam lived to be 930 years old, so there were folks who knew him until the flood. Afterward, I'm

sure Noah shared stories about what had gone on before.

The Bible doesn't say much about the Devil until the New Testament, where Paul tells us about the man of sin, John tells us about the Antichrist, and Jesus tells us about the Prince of this world. In the Old Testament, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Job are the only books that divulge the operation, presence, and attack Satan is planning against the works of God. Genesis introduces the serpent, his seed, and the woman's seed, but that is only a tiny portion of the puzzle. It takes effort to fit pieces together.

When I tell people that the Antichrist—the Devil incarnate—will appear physically, they don't believe that the Devil is an invisible being at this time. Instead, they believe the Antichrist is, or will be, a man born in Europe. These same people are willing to accept that Jesus came from heaven and lived on earth, but it's too difficult to believe Satan could enter into our reality.

Jesus came into our reality through the womb of the Virgin Mary, but Lucifer didn't. He will imitate Christ's second coming to convince mankind he is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. According to Revelation, he will come out of the sky with his angels, and their glory will be unlike anything ever witnessed by humanity. Many will be convinced he is God.

There are two distinctions between the appearance of Satan and Christ. The first is in timing: Satan appears during the fifth trumpet; Christ appears during the seventh bowl. Second: Christ's coming will be observed globally; the Devil's appearance will be local. The Bible says when Lucifer appears, he will walk the earth. However, when Christ comes, He never touches the ground but remains in the air.

Paul says, **“According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and**

with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”¹¹

God does not allow the Devil to imitate His second coming, but if we are not familiar with the Bible and the distinctions between what Christ can do and Lucifer can do, we will quickly be deceived.

Imagine holding a globe of the Earth. Because the planet rotates in a counter-clockwise direction and the Sun is stationary, as the Earth rotates, it gives the appearance that the Sun rises from the east. In reality, the Sun isn't moving; but the east coast will approach the Sun before the west coast due to the Earth's rotation. The same phenomenon will affect our perspective as Christ nears the planet. I believe Christ's descent will last several days, so there will be plenty of time for everyone worldwide to see Him. For the saints, it will be a time of joy. For the wicked an immense time of dread.

Satan will appear at various times and places but only locally. He will perform miracles as if he were God. The Devil will be granted authority to perform this enormous ruse to deceive the world. God allows it because of those who refuse to love the truth and be saved.

In the Old Testament: Genesis introduces the Devil; Job speaks about the Devil; Ezekiel tells us about the Devil's arrogance and rebellion against God; Daniel tells us about the Devil's enmity against the will and plans of God; Isaiah tells us the origin and reason for the Devil's expulsion from heaven. It also gives vital information for when Lucifer is destroyed after the seventh millennium.

* * * * *

The story in Isaiah 14 is a taunt against the king of Babylon that began in chapter 13. Its significance is that it switches in

¹¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17

verse 4 to be directed at the *real* king of Babylon. The story speaks of the king of Babylon coming to his end and mankind's response when they see it happen.

Remember, Isaiah wrote this about 730 BC when Babylon was only becoming a mighty nation, a hundred years before Nebuchadnezzar became king.

Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, was instrumental in bringing authority to Babylon as an empire. When Nebuchadnezzar became ruler, he was able to solidify support quickly and establish himself as the king of the world.

The point in the story is that although Babylon was only beginning to develop, it would play a significant role in the prophecies of Isaiah. Symbolically, it will play a crucial role at the end of time. We are going to have a crisis government that will form and enact laws in response to God's judgments.

When God talks about the *real* king of Babylon—and how the real Prince of this world will go to his destruction—the significance and parallel in *Plan A* and *Plan B* are identical. It is the timing of fulfillment that is different.

In Daniel 8, the horn power that comes out of the north is the Devil, a *real* king and master of intrigue. Revelation 17 describes a beast that comes out of the abyss and will go to his destruction. His power is indomitable because, from the human perspective, he will be unstoppable. An atomic bomb isn't going to kill the Devil.

We have a being under *Plan A* and *Plan B*, who is omnipotent from the human perspective. The only hope mankind has is that God destroys him. Daniel 8 verifies that the man of sin will come to his end, but not by human power.

Consider that Satan is still around from the beginning of God's creation. Adam, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Paul have all died. But the Devil has been there during each lifetime, watching, planning, and scheming. If God doesn't destroy the Devil, mankind has no hope. Words cannot describe the significance

of this situation in the absolute terms it deserves!

In the book of Ezekiel, the king named Gog is the prince of the territory Magog. God would use Gog to lead a host of nations against Israel. This person, Gog, under *Plan A*, would have been the Antichrist, the Devil incarnate. This being is the equivalent of the chief prince of a territory called Meshek and Tubal during the fifth trumpet in *Plan B*.

The prophecy starting in Ezekiel 38:1, says, **“The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief Prince of Meshek and Tubal; prophesy against him and say: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Gog, chief Prince of Meshek and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army—your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords.”’”**

Skip to verse 7. **“Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them.”** This sounds like what will happen at the end of the thousand years in *Plan B*.

That is why John says in Revelation 20, **“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.”**¹ Each person is going to be either inside or outside the holy city.

Ezekiel 38:8, **“After many days you will be called to arms. In future years you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all**

¹ Revelation 20:7–9

of them live in safety.” Under *Plan A*, the Israelites were to be restored to their homeland. According to the promises in Obadiah, Joel, and Jonah, God would have restored His people from all nations.

Verse 9, **“You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.”** God was going to bring this great horde of nations led by Gog against His people.

Verse 14–15, **“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of it? You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army.’”** This northern direction was critical because divinely appointed destruction always comes from the north.

In Isaiah 1, destruction was coming upon Israel from the north in the form of Babylonians; but Babylon lies east, not north. It is described as coming out of the north because, in Old Testament times, it was believed the earth was flat, so on a compass, north always pointed up and east to the right. The northern boundary of Israel’s territory was the Euphrates, which comes out of Turkey and flows through Syria and down into Iraq. So the Babylonians had to cross Israel’s northern border marked by the Euphrates.

According to Jeremiah, the punisher always came from the north. **“You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.”**¹ God will demonstrate He is superior and sovereign by engaging Lucifer and his followers in military conflict.

Verses 18–22, **“This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused,**

¹ Ezekiel 38:16

declares the Sovereign Lord. In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign Lord. Every man's sword will be against his brother. I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him." This is precisely what happens under *Plan B*!

If Israel had been faithful and turned from rebellion—if enough people had surrendered their lives to the leading of the Holy Spirit so that corporate reformation could take place—all of this could have happened many centuries earlier. *Plan A* was conditional. God provided and allowed for man's participation. Under *Plan A*, the first generation who came out of Egypt was supposed to enter the Promised Land. They failed to go in and died in the wilderness.

Plan B is unconditional. God will unilaterally do what must be done. Under *Plan B*, when the time comes to go in, ready or not, the saints will go in. We cannot hasten the second coming nor delay it. *Plan B* will happen as planned.

Turn to Revelation 9:15–16. **"And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. I heard their number."** This describes a punctiliar moment, a predestined, pre-decreed, pre-determined point in time. How much more specific would one have to be?

God's timing under *Plan B*, the end-time story, is unconditional. It is perfect. It is going to happen whether we're

ready or not! That is how I know that when it comes time for the Sabbath millennium to begin, Jesus will come. From my study of scriptural timing, we're in that window of time where the six-thousandth year will occur. But remember, the 1,335 days of the Great Tribulation, equaling three years and eight months, are ahead of us. This time of trouble will absolutely occur before Christ returns.

The Bible says He delivered the children of Israel, **“At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the Lord’s divisions left Egypt.”**¹ When it came time to write the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, it was written on the very day that it had to be: the first day of the first month of the first year of a jubilee cycle. When it came time for the birth of Christ, the Bible says, **“At the fullness of time, God sent His Son.”**² Jesus died on Golgotha as the sacrificial lamb at the very time the symbolic lamb was being sacrificed at the temple in downtown Jerusalem. God’s timing is incredible. Nothing can delay it, nor can it be hastened.

From Ezekiel, we have a profound picture of what God intended to do under *Plan A*. If Israel had been faithful, they too could have understood His plans. But they had eyes that couldn’t see and ears that couldn’t hear, just like some Christians today.

In Isaiah 14:4–8, **“You [the righteous] will take up this taunt against the [real] king of Babylon: How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended. The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression. All the lands are at rest and at peace; they break into singing. Even the junipers and the cedars of Lebanon gloat over you and say, ‘Now that you have been laid low, no one comes to cut us down.’”**

¹ Exodus 12:41

² Galatians 4:4

Isn't it appalling how the Devil treats people? He strikes people with unceasing blows and never quits. His relentless aggression and hatred know no bounds. Adults, bullied as kids, know the experience. There is nothing you can do to make the pain and harassment stop. No one is big enough to beat the bully; you simply can't escape. Teachers can't help because a bully always acts when no one is looking, so it just continues.

“But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise—let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy—your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.”¹ This is a prophetic passage that is in harmony with the book of Ezekiel. God is going to raise Israel—He will resurrect the dead—and King David will reign on his throne. Isaiah is abundantly clear that the earth will give birth to her dead.

In Isaiah 14:9, “The grave is all astir” because the wicked would have been resurrected *in Plan A*. In *Plan B*, the graves of all the wicked will be opened at the end of one thousand years so that they (a) see the holy city, (b) meet their maker face-to-face, and (c) understand why they are not redeemed. God reveals to each wicked person their judgment and sentence. The wicked, at the end of the millennium, will not only see God but also see the Devil.

* * * * *

I have spent extra time on chapter 14 because it relates to everyone living today. People diminish the importance of the Old Testament, thinking it is merely a historical record of Israel's apostasy and rebellion. Most Christians today believe that the God of the New Testament differs from the God of the Old. This belief will change when the Great Tribulation begins.

The book of Isaiah is imperative in understanding the ways of God. This requires a large segment of time to analyze what God does in various situations. When we have an extensive

¹ Isaiah 26:19

sampling, our understanding of His behavior grows. Old Testament prophets provide much information to examine, but much is taken out of context. Preachers use a verse but omit the circumstance in which it was said.

“Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: ‘Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a wilderness, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?’”¹

It is clear from the passage that Satan is recognized as a man. He is the man of sin and lawlessness. Ultimately, Satan’s omnipotent appearance and sovereign authority will be shown as false. And when he is shown to be subject to death, people will regard him as they see themselves, saying, “He is like us, subject to death, and about to meet his destruction.”

Verse 20, **“Let the offspring of the wicked never be mentioned again.”** They will be destroyed.

Verse 22, **“‘I will rise up against them,’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘I will wipe out Babylon’s name and survivors, her offspring and descendants,’ declares the Lord.”** In the Jewish economy, it was imperative to have children. Without descendants, there was no nation and no way to keep the land in the family.

Verses 26–27, **“This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?”** God has a plan and purpose for mankind. Evolution denies this, but His plans will be seen.

* * * * *

Chapters 15 and 16 are a prophecy against Moab. The Moabites descended from Lot through his daughters, so they are distant relatives of the Israelites. And, like some families,

¹ Isaiah 14:16–17

there was contempt and hatred for generations between the two.

Go to Isaiah 16:4–5. God was speaking through Isaiah to the Moabites. **“Let the Moabite fugitives stay with you; be their shelter from the destroyer.’ The oppressor will come to an end, and destruction will cease; the aggressor will vanish from the land. In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it—one from the house of David—one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.”**

This oracle concerning Moab was a messianic promise that some Moabites would be redeemed. Some would come out and separate themselves from Moab. Under *Plan A*, before God would bring Gog and Magog against Israel, Israel would have been sent throughout all the nations to gather the honest in heart. The 144,000 will do the same under *Plan B*.

In Isaiah 16:14, God brought the oracle against Moab into very local terms. **“But now the Lord says: ‘Within three years, as a servant bound by contract would count them, Moab’s splendor and all her many people will be despised, and her survivors will be very few and feeble.’”**

Moab was about to be overrun by the king of Assyria. In his sweep through the northern portion of Israel, he finally eliminated the ten tribes in 722 BC.

Shalmaneser V was the giant lawnmower God used to clear the whole land filled with apostasy and evil. If Israel was evil, the Moabites were even worse. What do the words “A servant bound by contract would count them” mean? The servant was going to pay close attention to the clock. He wanted to monitor the work time being exchanged for his pay.

In Isaiah 17, we have moved from Moab to Damascus, which was about to receive God’s wrath. Keep in mind this was not uniquely about Israel. It was about the entire world. God was going to deal with Damascus, which, for the time being, was

one of two capital cities in northern Israel. After Assyria made Damascus its capital, it would be a kingpin for a short time.

“A prophecy against Damascus: ‘See, Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins. The cities of Aroer will be deserted and left to flocks, which will lie down, with no one to make them afraid. The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim, and royal power from Damascus; the remnant of Aram will be like the glory of the Israelites,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”¹ The chapter was a condemnation of their behavior. They had forgotten God.

Verse 4, **“In that day the glory of Jacob will fade; the fat of his body will waste away.”**

Verses 7–9, **“In that day people will look to their Maker and turn their eyes to the Holy One of Israel. They will not look to the altars, the work of their hands, and they will have no regard for the Asherah poles and the incense altars their fingers have made. In that day their strong cities, which they left because of the Israelites, will be like places abandoned to thickets and undergrowth. And all will be desolation.”**

Verse 12, **“Woe to the many nations that rage—they rage like the raging sea! Woe to the peoples who roar—they roar like the roaring of great waters!”** In Bible prophecy, waters represent people. This is where the concept originated. **“Although the peoples roar like the roar of surging waters, when he rebukes them they flee far away, driven before the wind like chaff on the hills, like tumbleweed before a gale. In the evening, sudden terror!”**²

Earlier, I referred to a time when, in *Plan B*, the 144,000 will bring a great multitude out of Babylon (who controls the whole world) just before the second coming. Under *Plan A*, the same scenario was to take place.

Isaiah 18 describes God bringing foreigners to partner with Israel. **“Woe to the land of whirring wings [grasshoppers]**

¹ Isaiah 17:1–3

² Isaiah 17:13–14

along the rivers of Cush [Egypt], which sends envoys by sea in papyrus boats over the water. Go, swift messengers, to a people tall and smooth-skinned, to a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers.”¹

Verse 7, **“At that time gifts will be brought to the Lord Almighty from a people tall and smooth-skinned, from a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers—the gifts will be brought to Mount Zion, the place of the Name of the Lord Almighty.”** This describes a successful missionary trip. Many sincere people would have been gathered out of Egypt and brought to Israel.

God would have a great ingathering with these people who are bringing gifts. This was the result God intended from the great commission given at Mount Sinai. In Exodus 19, God said, “You will be a holy nation for me, a kingdom of priests sent forth throughout the earth to represent my holy name and to tell of my generous salvation. Go ye therefore into all the world.” Yet they didn’t do it. This is a profound mystery that most Christians do not understand. The Jews, as a tribal nation, were merely selected to be trustees of the gospel. But Christians have been misled to regard the Jews as a ‘teacher’s pet’ with God being the teacher.

Christians believe God favored Israel until the cross. Then, He opened the door for Christians to take up the gospel commission. The truth is God chose Israel to be trustees of the gospel. When they failed, He raised the Christian Church. When they failed, God raised Protestants to carry on the work. When they fail—and Protestants will fail—God will delegate the work to the 144,000 who will not fail. In the end, God will accomplish what He wanted of Israel from the beginning.

Isaiah 18 is most important because people need to understand that in God’s selection of Israel, He never considered

¹ Isaiah 18:1-2

them exclusive; He simply required messengers to demonstrate His love. He blessed Israel with the opportunity because of Abraham. God wanted a nation of baby Abrahams but only encountered rebellion. Yet, we shouldn't be too hard on the Jews; their history is no different than any other people. Just the names, places, and dates change.

* * * * *

In Isaiah 19, God gave an oracle concerning Egypt. **“See, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt with fear. ‘I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian—brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom. The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists. I will hand the Egyptians over to the power of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them,’ declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty. The waters of the river will dry up, and the riverbed will be parched and dry. The canals will stink; the streams of Egypt will dwindle and dry up. The reeds and rushes will wither, also the plants along the Nile, at the mouth of the river. Every sown field along the Nile will become parched, will blow away and be no more.”**¹

Verses 11–14, **“The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give senseless advice. How can you say to Pharaoh, ‘I am one of the wise men, a disciple of the ancient kings’? Where are your wise men now? Let them show you and make known what the Lord Almighty has planned against Egypt. The officials of Zoan have become fools, the leaders of Memphis are deceived; the cornerstones of her peoples have led Egypt astray. The Lord has poured into them a spirit of dizziness; they make Egypt stagger in all that she does, as a drunkard staggers around**

¹ Isaiah 19:1–7

in his vomit.” We must understand the language used in Isaiah because it helps us understand Revelation.

In verse 2, the Lord said He would stir up *Egyptian against Egyptian*. This means civil war. Under Plan A, God is going to hand the Egyptians over to the Antichrist, Gog. In Daniel 8, the horn power is a cruel, stern-faced king. He is not going to let his captives go home. This is an indescribably abusive, even satanic, king who will rule. The contest between who will and will not submit to his authority brings about the civil war.

Now, compare what was to happen in Isaiah 19 with what will happen during the sixth trumpet of Revelation 9. In the sixth trumpet, when Satan is physically upon earth and many believe him to be God, he will demand control of every nation. A worldwide civil war will ensue. He will call for complete dominion to set up the mark of the beast. If you wish to receive the necessities of life, you will have to join and be loyal to his government. You will have to worship according to his dictates. Many will oppose this. Thus, Satan orders his followers to militarily take over the world. The civil war follows.

Ironically, the Devil has influenced people to be so evil that not even he can control them. That is precisely the problem with sin—it is uncontrollable. It is even more problematic than a wisteria vine!

Revelation 9 says that the number of mounted troops is two hundred million. John even heard the number. If you took all the armies in uniform today and put them in one giant stadium, the total number of personnel would be just over twenty million.

At the time of this warfare, the earth's population will be twenty-five percent less than it is now because of the trumpet judgments. So, this two hundred million man army becomes a large percentage of the world standing on Satan's side, bearing arms to establish his government. The world is in for a serious *sleigh* ride, spelled S-L-A-Y. Let that sink in.

Isaiah 19:18–20, **“In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord Almighty. One of them will be called the City of the Sun. In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the Lord at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt.”**

Verse 21, **“So the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and keep them.”**

The Lord is saying that he intends to pit brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. Under *Plan A*, this war would have caused the Egyptians to lose heart and succumb. God was then going to dry up the Nile, the great river of Egypt. By drying up the river, there was nothing to restrict its war from accomplishing its objectives. The barrier created by the Nile River had to be removed so people could fight or flee. That is precisely the whole issue.

Verses 23–25 say, **“In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.’”**

Notice the *third, third, third*. The Lord will bring about the world’s destruction but will rescue His people who are not exclusively Israel. If that doesn’t destroy the myth of Israel’s exclusivity, I don’t know a text that would convince you.

In the next chapter, I’ll go through Isaiah 20, where God calls Isaiah into three years of enormous humiliation and embarrassment. Seeing a naked man with a sober but embarrassingly stark appearance deliver a message from the Lord would be a sight not easily forgotten.

CHAPTER 5



The Allure of Sin

A prophet has words to share but generally no listeners. Isaiah was anticipating the year of the Lord but the people to whom he had been sent had no interest in what he had to say. So the Lord grabbed their attention. In chapter 20, God told Isaiah to go naked for three years. Who would volunteer for such a task?

To put this in perspective, let me ask you to contrast the nakedness one might see in Las Vegas with the nakedness one might see in a primitive, third-world country. How would you compare the two forms of nudity? One derives from lasciviousness, the other from despair. Sin, at the onset, is always attractive; Satan ‘dolls it up’ to disguise it. Ultimately, it is only recognized when it’s too late.

God, through Isaiah, was trying to show the vast difference between the origin of sin and the outcome of sin. Isaiah was not lavishly dressed. Instead, his nudity was unattractive, offensive, and disgusting. His nakedness was embarrassing for everyone, yet elicited curiosity.

How would a prophet know he is to do this offensive and culturally unacceptable act? The closest behavior it would resemble is slavery. And how would a prophet who gets a message like this react? Imagine a prominent televangelist going on air and saying, “I have a message from God He wants you to hear,” and then begin to undress. This is essentially what happened to Isaiah.

Isaiah’s communication with the Lord was not about a séance or other dubious encounter with God. When the Lord spoke to Isaiah, it was the same voice that spoke to Abraham telling him to offer up his son as a living sacrifice. These men walked with God and knew His voice.

Isaiah was called to present the most humiliating message he could muster. His message was not directed so much at Israel but at Egypt. This is because the two southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin had formed a protection alliance with Egypt. The confidence of God’s people in His protection had been replaced by a national security alliance with the neighboring Pharaoh. Their trust and assurance were in a powerful Egypt, mightier in its locale than Babylon or Assyria. Since Assyria had destroyed the northern ten kingdoms, the two in the south were terrified they would be destroyed also.

Eventually, in the time of Hezekiah, the king of Assyria marched against Jerusalem. The question was, “Where was Egypt?” As this was developing, God said to Isaiah, **“Take off the sackcloth from your body and the sandals from your feet.”**¹

There has been speculation that Isaiah wore a loincloth, but verses 3–4 state that he didn’t. **“Then the Lord said, ‘Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared—to Egypt’s shame.’”**

¹ Isaiah 20:2

Nudity can be alluring and attractive or shameful and disgusting—it depends on the setting. Dark rooms, throbbing lights, and elaborate apparel do not fool God. In God's sight, sin is sin. Unfortunately, He often has to strip away the facade so we can waken to what sin really is.

In chapter 20, God spoke against Egypt and to His people in Jerusalem. **“Those who trusted in Cush and boasted in Egypt will be dismayed and put to shame. In that day the people who live on this coast will say, ‘See what has happened to those we relied on, those we fled to for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! How then can we escape?’”**¹ God was saying, “The king of Assyria will take over. Pharaoh is not going to resist. And if Pharaoh can't stand against what the Lord has decreed, how can you?”

* * * * *

In Isaiah 21, we find a second oracle against Babylon. This chapter is important because it reveals aspects about God we need to know: His behavior, His understanding of righteousness and evil, and His ways of dealing with mankind. The experience we find in Isaiah parallels what we will experience in Revelation.

Chapter 21 begins with a paradoxical statement, **“A prophecy against the Desert by the Sea: Like whirlwinds sweeping through the southland, an invader comes from the desert, from a land of terror.”** What a great contrast: the desert beside much water. Crops can't grow in the desert, and seawater can't be used for irrigation.

Babylon was being called ‘the Desert by the Sea’ because, in due time, Babylon would become an isolated, vandalized, broken-down set of ruins, never to be rebuilt or inhabited again. It would be a ghost town. Jesus told the Pharisees, **“You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything**

¹ Isaiah 20:5–6

unclean.¹ They were spiritually dead inside but polished like new on the outside. How poetic!

Isaiah 21:2, **“A dire vision has been shown to me: The traitor betrays, the looter takes loot. Elam, attack! Media, lay siege! I will bring to an end all the groaning she caused [others].”** The Medes were going to attack the province of Elam, which is where Babylon was located. God was showing Isaiah what He intended to do with Babylon, which was a growing power but still a hundred years away from having world dominion.

God commissioned the book of Isaiah for those who would live during and after their Babylonian captivity. He wanted them to realize that as great as Babylon was its dominance would end. The message is the same for the United States.

As an example in our own time, we saw in the early '90s the crumbling of the Soviet Union's Eastern bloc countries. Historians will give a human answer as to why this happened. But the more extensive explanation is that the hand of God often moves in world affairs.

Daniel 4:17 says, **“So that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.”** Sometimes this isn't easy to accept, even when seeing it with our own eyes.

In Isaiah 21, God was saying that even though Babylon was to become great, the day would come when it received its punishment. Verse 9 was a message that would be proclaimed at that time. **“Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: ‘Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!’ ”**

If you understand what was being said, you will understand, in part, the second angel's message in Revelation 14. God was saying in chapter 21 that Babylon would arise to become a

¹ Matthew 23:27

powerful empire, but not by its own prowess. It would become powerful because God would raise Nebuchadnezzar to be His servant. In Ezekiel, **“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.’”**¹

In Daniel’s vision, Nebuchadnezzar is the tree. God said to him, “The birds of the air come and land in the branches of your kingdom, and the beasts of the field rest in the shade. But it was the God of heaven who set you up and gave you power and great authority, and He will take you down.” Nebuchadnezzar spent seven years in humiliation before finally accepting that the God of heaven was who He claimed to be.²

I was conducting a seminar when someone came up and asked, “Who is going to be the next president?” I said, “The Bible has the answer. Daniel 4:17 says it will be **“The lowliest of people.”** This is true at all times and in all places. Old Testament history is replete with examples of how those in power grew in corruption. Finally, a nation passed the point of no return, and God stepped in to start over with a new group of people, a new government, and a new king.

It is important to understand that no matter how high and mighty a nation becomes or powerful it may be, it comes to an end. That is why the Bible says, **“Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!”**

This message was directed toward a future time (after Isaiah) when Babylon would be attacked and brought down by the Medes and Persians. This vision was an obscure message of hope. God wanted the remnant who went into captivity to study Isaiah’s writings. They needed to understand that He had a plan, and His will surpassed Babylon’s strategic goals, authority, and power.

The parallel in Revelation 14 is that when the first four judgments occur, the crisis government will implement

¹ Ezekiel 30:10

² Daniel 4

martial law the world over. Then when the Antichrist arrives, everyone will think he is the greatest king ever. Who can resist the authority and refute the reasoning behind this logic? Let me explain.

When God's judgments fall, everyone will quickly admit: "God is angry. We must do something to appease Him or we will all perish." This is why we will see Friday laws in Muslim countries, Saturday laws in Israel, and Sunday laws in Catholic and Protestant countries. Everyone will endeavor to enforce their religious culture to appease God. The rationale being: We can appease God if we stop sinning. But it won't work; this will be a *global* problem. All who oppose the state's methods will be considered enemies. It will demand everyone fall in line.

Isaiah alluded that God would use Babylon to punish Israel. In chapter 22, the prophecy concerns the Valley of Vision. This is another paradoxical term concerning Jerusalem which sits on Mount Zion. When you're in a valley, you have limited vision. But when on top of a mountain, your vision is unlimited. So the term *Valley of Vision* indicated a position of obscurity. That was Israel's problem. They were floundering in a ravine of sin instead of a shining light on a hilltop.

"What troubles you now, that you have all gone up on the roofs, you town so full of commotion, you city of tumult and revelry? Your slain were not killed by the sword, nor did they die in battle. All your leaders have fled together; they have been captured without using the bow."¹ Back then armies would siege a city and cut off its food and water. Inevitably, the inhabitants would either surrender or die. These verses refer to those who died by famine.

"All you who were caught were taken prisoner together, having fled while the enemy was still far away. Therefore I said, 'Turn away from me; let me weep bitterly. Do not try to console me over the destruction of my people.' The Lord, the Lord Almighty, has a day of tumult and trampling and terror

¹ Isaiah 22:1-3

in the Valley of Vision, a day of battering down walls and of crying out to the mountains.”¹ God was visiting Jerusalem.

“There is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! ‘Let us eat and drink,’ you say, ‘for tomorrow we die!’”² Sin is inebriating. Living a sinful life removes us from the sobriety necessary to consider (a) the will of God and (b) our actions with respect to His will. It separates cause and effect. We live in a world where people deny the authority of God and justify wrongdoing.

As God’s people moved away from Him, they justified their indecent behavior without thought of accountability. This is precisely what is happening in our world today. Morally repugnant products that are despicable to God are shown in theaters, on television, and the internet. Yet, many Christians indulge, seeing it as entertainment. Arguments between right and wrong are between people having different values. One side believes God has no absolutes. Our culture today is trying desperately to eliminate God from the equation because once He is eliminated, all that remains is opinion. Verse 13 is the ultimate statement on fatalism.

In the next verse, **“The Lord Almighty has revealed this in my hearing: ‘Till your dying day [Israel] this sin will not be atoned for,’ says the Lord, the Lord Almighty.”³** They had passed the point of no return. They had corporately sinned beyond the reach of atonement. There was no recovery. God would destroy the nation of Israel.

The Lord says to Isaiah, **“Go, say to this steward, to Shebna the palace administrator: ‘What are you doing here and who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here, hewing your grave on the height [the side of a mountain] and chiseling your resting place in the rock? Beware, the Lord**

1 Isaiah 22:3-5

2 Isaiah 22:13

3 Isaiah 22:14

is about to take firm hold of you and hurl you away, you mighty man. He will roll you up tightly like a [little] ball and throw you into a large country. There you will die and there the chariots you were so proud of will become a disgrace to your master's house.'"¹

Shebna should have been a better steward. He should have used his influence, knowledge, and authority responsibly to guide the people in the ways of the Lord. Instead, he was a disgrace. Shebna worked for the system. As a politician and steward of Jerusalem, his whole objective in life was to profit by being as accommodating, expedient, and savvy as necessary to stay in power. Shebna was concerned about his career rather than his calling. His responsibility was to inform people of God's will and stand against the encroachment of sin. But he became useless as God's steward.

Systems have a tremendous compelling force. Soldiers have committed acts of atrocity and, when brought to testify for their actions, lay the blame at their superiors' feet. Their defense being, "I was part of the system. I was a career soldier. I just took orders. I have no accountability except to my superior, so deal with him." This was the argument at Nuremberg. It wasn't allowed as a defense then and it won't be in the future.

God says, "I won't accept that excuse. You are a thinking, moral, free agent. You should be able to reason. If you do wrong, you will pay for it." God is saying to Shebna, "Listen, you wicked servant. You have not stood for what is right. You have not called sin by its right name. You have not done your part in correcting the system. Rather, you have been looking out for yourself. You have built a fine mausoleum on the mountain with your wealth but haven't taken care of the indigent. You have not done what you were called to do. Therefore, I'm going to throw you out of the land. You are useless. I will put another servant in your place who will be faithful."

Revelation talks about a beast with seven heads and ten

¹ Isaiah 22:15-18

horns. During the Great Tribulation, all seven world religions will be consolidated into one, and the ten kings (political entities) will give their authority to the Devil. Few people will fight a system. Most people are too afraid and don't want to put forth the effort. This is why the question is asked in Revelation 13:4, **“Who is like the beast [the system]? Who can wage war against it?”**

* * * * *

The book of Isaiah methodically shows that God has issues with every nation. In chapter 23, Isaiah discusses God's sovereign ways and how He brings everything into accountability. It is easy for the carnal heart and mind to pretend that we can escape God's scrutiny. People mistakenly think of God as having the same human attributes as we have. But God is not deceived. All God does is perfect; nothing escapes His attention.

Isaiah 23 was an oracle against the powerful city of Tyre, a great trading center on the coast of the Mediterranean about 150 miles north of Israel. In verse 1, God was letting the survivors of Israel know that everyone would meet their moment of reckoning. **“Wail, you ships of Tarshish! For Tyre is destroyed and left without house or harbor.”** In Isaiah's time, merchant ships and warships would leave port for several years. During their absence, the city could be destroyed so that when they returned, there was nothing there—no home, no family, nothing!

The Lord raises the question in verse 8, **“Who planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traders are renowned in the earth?”** He answers his own question, **“The Lord Almighty planned it, to bring down her pride in all her splendor and to humble all who are renowned on the earth.”**¹

I once heard it said, “The world's smallest package is a man wrapped up in himself.” It is for this reason that God plans to

¹ Isaiah 23:9

humble the proud throughout the earth. There is a day of reckoning coming, not only for believers but also non-believers.

We need to realize that the Book of Isaiah was not written for just church-going people. It was written for anyone who wanted to understand what lay ahead, whether they believed in the God of heaven or accepted their accountability to Him. The book of Revelation was written for the same class of people—those who want to know what their end will be.

Isaiah 24 brings the previous eleven chapters into focus. The chapter reads like it is describing the first trumpet, albeit under *Plan A*. **“See, the Lord is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants—it will be the same for priest as for people, for the master as for his servant, for the mistress as for her servant, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The Lord has spoken this word.”**¹

God promised that judgments were coming and the playing field would be leveled. It didn’t matter if people were rich or poor; all would be in the same predicament.

Verses 5–6 tell us why His judgments were coming. Every nation then and now has guilt to bear. **“The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth’s inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.”**

We read in chapter four that under *Plan A*, God would call fire out of heaven and burn up Gog, Magog, and all other nations. Here, Isaiah was alluding to the same outcome.

Interestingly, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel lived close together and described the same events. The one exception was that there was no explicit chronological order of how

¹ Isaiah 24:1–3

they would come to pass under *Plan A*. God didn't give a clear order of events under *Plan A*; Messiah himself would have been directing what took place from Jerusalem.

In Isaiah 24:8–10, the Lord has dealt with the great cities of the world and is talking to them collectively. **“The joyful timbrels are stilled, the noise of the revelers has stopped, the joyful harp is silent. No longer do they drink wine with a song; the beer is bitter to its drinkers. The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred.”**

Move to verse 13, **“So will it be on the earth and among the nations, as when an olive tree is beaten, or as when gleanings are left after the grape harvest.”**

Continuing with verse 17, **“Terror and pit and snare await you, people of the earth. Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is violently shaken.** [These are earthquakes felt around the world. Both Isaiah and Revelation mention global earthquakes. *Plan A* and *Plan B* have many parallels.] **The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls—never to rise again. In that day the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.”**¹

Verse 23, **“The moon will be dismayed, the sun ashamed; for the Lord Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders—with great glory.”** There would have been signs in the sun, moon, and stars.

Incidentally, the falling of the stars was a symbolic expression of the falling of the kings of the earth. The darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon to blood were signs that portend the collapse of the powers and infrastructures of earth.

¹ Isaiah 24:17–21

Let me pause for a moment to synthesize the concepts of *Plan A* to ensure we understand them. My explanation begins one hundred years before the Babylonian captivity. Israel had apostatized. The ten northern tribes were so useless that God had the Assyrian king destroy them in 722 BC. This left Judah and Benjamin in the south. These two remaining tribes continued in their apostasy and became so decadent that, a hundred years later, God sent the king of Babylon to capture and exile them. God had spoken through the prophets foretelling He would restore a remnant to their homeland.

We know from the book of Daniel that God gave Israel 490 years of probationary time to repent of their rebellion. Had they cooperated with Him, He would have then brought an end to sin. Jesus would have come as Messiah at the end of 69 Jubilee weeks, begun His ministry during the 70th week, and died in the middle of that week to confirm the covenant. Then, upon His resurrection, Christ would have remained on earth to establish His kingdom *here* rather than ascending to heaven.

Let me explain this further. I understand that at the beginning of the 70th week, Jesus began his ministry in AD 27. He died in AD 30, the middle of the 'seven-year' week. Then, upon His resurrection, He would have started establishing His kingdom which would have continued beyond the 70th week. The Bible doesn't say how long it would have been before a new heaven and earth were created, but it would have been within a generation of fifty years. That time frame would make sense considering the length of a jubilee cycle. Whatever the timing, God would have ended this sin-filled world.

This kingdom would have started small, growing until the Father would leave heaven and join the Son to reign on the earth. Israel was to carry the good news invitation throughout the world: "The kingdom of God is now with men, and all who want to be in His kingdom must quickly come. Babylon has fallen. The world's empires are about to be destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah were. Flee for your lives. Come to Jerusalem,

the city of refuge.”

God would have then raised Gog, the king from the north, who would have led the other nations in rebellion against Jerusalem. In response, God would have brought fire out of heaven and burned them up. Afterward, God would have created the new heaven and earth written about at the end of Isaiah. Under *Plan A*, the outcome would have been the same as *Plan B*, except *Plan A* would have happened two thousand years ago.

Speaking of Jesus, the Bible says in John 1:11, **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”** After the Jews rejected Jesus as Messiah, God allowed Gentiles to be His trustees. When the time allotted to them is fulfilled, God will say, “Okay, ready or not, here we come.”

Isaiah gave us essential details about God’s original plan. However, those alive today involved with *Plan B* must understand the parallels between the two plans. The objectives of both plans are the same. Even the process is almost identical. But in *Plan B*, God works from New Jerusalem instead of historical Jerusalem. The book of Revelation states the holy city, New Jerusalem, will descend from heaven. The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation explain what God is going to do and how He will do it.

* * * * *

Let’s move on to Isaiah 25. **“On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.”**¹ This describes a wedding banquet where the best of everything is presented. Under *Plan A*, this would have been conducted on earth before the destruction of sin.

Remember, at that time, celebrating Passover was required. Eventually, though, the symbolism for these ceremonies would have gone away. The need for a sacrificial lamb would have ended with Christ’s death.

¹ Isaiah 25:6

“On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.”¹ Isaiah was to the Old Testament and *Plan A* what Revelation is to the New Testament and *Plan B*.

Verse 9, **“In that day they will say, ‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’”** Aren’t we grateful when someone we trust comes through?

“The hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain; but Moab will be trampled in their land as straw is trampled down in the manure. They will stretch out their hands in it, as swimmers stretch out their hands to swim. God will bring down their pride despite the cleverness of their hands. He will bring down your high fortified walls and lay them low; he will bring them down to the ground, to the very dust.”²

Isaiah gives us a rich understanding of God’s ways, intentions, and purposes. Yet, most of this is lost or ignored in Bible studies today. Most Christians don’t consider the Old Testament relevant. I pray this book is helping you discover how wonderful God’s plans were from the beginning.

1 Isaiah 25:7–8

2 Isaiah 25:10–12

CHAPTER 6



Plan A / Plan B

As we continue to examine Isaiah, I pray you will be inspired and encouraged. The book's language and poetic fullness may only be understood wearing his sandals, walking the dusty roads he traveled. Besides containing historical data, Isaiah includes eloquent Old Testament prose which describes God's ways and concerns.

Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet, delivered messages from God to Israel revealing the character of God: what He is like, tolerates, and deems important. As you go through the book, keep reminding yourself of what is important to God and that some of the language in *Plan A* will play out in *Plan B*.

“On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken.”¹ These verses are

¹ Isaiah 25:7-8

profound! It was customary in Isaiah's day to wrap the body of a dead person with a linen sheet called a shroud.

God himself will destroy death. This sounds very much like Revelation 21:4 which says, **"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."**

In 1 Corinthians 15:54, Paul says, **"When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'"** The parallel between *Plan A* and *Plan B* is clear. God will remove the disgrace of His people and their sins will be permanently eliminated.

The book of Isaiah is more about redemption than destruction; more about the love of God than His vengeance; more concerned about the kingdom of God than the kingdoms of men. The Bible says in Isaiah 25:9, **"In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'"** Couple that verse with Isaiah 26:4, **"Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal."** imagine the encouragement this brought to Isaiah!

Under *Plan A*, God was going to establish His kingdom over a period of time, but there were issues to be resolved before it could take possession of the earth. Before the establishment of God's kingdom under *Plan A*, Messiah would be born and, while establishing the kingdom of Israel, send warning judgments upon the entire world. These judgments would have been evidence that God was about to set up His kingdom. And if you wanted to be a part of His kingdom, you had to forsake your own nation to join the nation of Israel.

Isaiah 26:9–10 says, **"My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness. But when grace is shown to the wicked, they**

do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the Lord.” The profound point of these verses is that God’s judgments will not change the ways of those in total rebellion, those whose hearts are hardened by sin.

Verse 11, **“Lord, your hand is lifted high, but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people and be put to shame; let the fire reserved for your enemies consume them.”** Isaiah uses imagery mentioned in a previous chapter: When a king held up his hand, it was a sign that his will was to be carried out until he put his hand down, indicating it was enough. Read the story of Moses holding up his hands until the Amalekites were defeated in Exodus 17. This was the day the sun stood still.

The book of Isaiah repeatedly exposed the failures of Israel. You get the impression that Isaiah was beating a dead horse, pointing out Israel’s failings.

In Chapter 26, Isaiah wrote, **“But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise—let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy—your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the Lord is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed on it; the earth will conceal its slain no longer.”**¹

These three verses are significant within the context of *Plan A*. Sure, we believe in a coming resurrection at the end of time, but here is the promise under *Plan A*. The dead would live! Their bodies would rise from the graves!

The other day I watched television for a few minutes while running errands. The program was an award ceremony for celebrities of notoriety in Hollywood. I was only at this place for about ten minutes, so I didn’t quite understand the purpose

¹ Isaiah 26:19–21

of the awards, but I understood that it was recognition for some great accomplishment. The crowd was enormous, and as these stars came forth to receive the adulation, praise, honor, and glory they were being recognized for, they received a little statue to commemorate the achievement.

While driving home, I thought about that show, and it dawned on me that when the Lord comes to punish people for their sins, those notorious for their representation and promotion of evil will certainly receive a great deal of His wrath. Those who have participated in the most prominent industry that promotes immorality—the sin responsible for the degeneration of mankind—God is going to recognize them with the appropriate punishment. I saw an interesting paradox in how that situation of celebration will be reversed.

The Bible says in Isaiah 27:1, **“In that day, the Lord will punish with his sword—his fierce, great and powerful sword.”** In Revelation 19, John saw Jesus coming on a white horse, and “out of His mouth came a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.” The parallel between *Plan A* and *Plan B* is unmistakable. What God intended to do under *Plan A*, He will certainly do under *Plan B*. Because of the transition, there are a few changes, but God’s objectives will be met. All the promises God made to Abraham will be fulfilled.

Through the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, God predicted that He would banish Israel from the land. He would chastise and punish the nation, destroying all but a remnant. Afterward, He promised restoration. **“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the Most Holy Place.”**¹

The promise of Israel’s restoration and future depended on their response to the Lord’s covenant. What God intended to do was *conditional* from the beginning, in the sense that IF

¹ Daniel 9:24

they would be His people, He would be their God.

Many Christians create a massive problem by taking the statements of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel as *unconditional* declarations, insisting that ancient Israel must receive what God offered or else He is a liar. This is why there is so much interest concerning Israel today. Under *Plan A*, if Israel had faithfully obeyed the Lord's commands, they would have received the benefit of every promise God made to them.

Let me explain using a parent-child analogy. If you have a child and promise him that IF he makes an A on his next test, you will give him \$5.00. Do you owe him the money if he brings home a B? No. You have kept your promise by NOT giving him the money. Do you see the dilemma with Israel?

If you start at Exodus 19 and read through Deuteronomy, you will find that the terms and conditions of the covenant given to Israel are proffered such that God has *an out*. Conversely, He does not have *an out* with Abraham. God did not give Abraham a *conditional* covenant. He gave him a unilateral covenant that will be fulfilled regardless of man's behavior. That covenant promised Abraham's offspring would inherit the land and be as numerous as the stars of the sky. That will happen.

This is talking about more than a small piece of land between the Euphrates and the Nile in the Middle East. Abraham's heirs will inherit the earth. The Bible says of Abraham that "**He was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.**"¹ Although he didn't see it, he died holding on to the promise by faith. One day, Abraham will awaken and receive what was promised to him. And all who believe in Christ will be reckoned as Abraham's offspring. Paul says in Galatians 3:29, "**If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**"

My emphasis is twofold. Some prophecies are unconditional, and some are conditional. First, the apocalyptic prophecies

¹ Hebrews 11:10

of Daniel and Revelation are unconditional. These are unilaterally declared. This means that they *will* happen! Second, the prophecies given to Israel in the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah were conditional. They were bilateral. Keep these two types of prophecies in your mind so what I say next will make sense.

In Daniel 2, the story proceeds from Babylon to Medo-Persia, to Greece, to Rome, the feet, then the kingdom of the toes, and last, the rock comes and hits the image at its feet blowing everything away. This prophecy is unconditional. God declared the order of the seven kingdoms and it *will* happen that way.

How could God give a conditional prophecy to Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah and an unconditional prophecy to Daniel? All of these prophets lived around the same time. Was God speaking out of both sides of His mouth? Did He mean what He was promising Israel? How could He give unconditional and conditional prophecies when the two conflict?

The answer is simple. Consider the vision when the angel Gabriel was talking to Daniel, **“Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ [one Jubilee cycle] and [then] sixty-two [more] ‘sevens’ [totaling of 483 years].”**¹ That is precisely what happened. From Artaxerxes’ decree in 457 BC to the baptism of Christ and commencement of His ministry on the banks of the Jordan River is 483 years.

Gabriel was saying, “Look, Daniel, Israel is only going to get a total of 70 weeks. Messiah will appear after the completion of 69 weeks so that you will have Messiah in your midst for the last seven years—the 70th week. In the middle of that 70th week, Messiah will be sacrificed and confirm the covenant of salvation with His own blood.” God could not ratify the offer of salvation until Jesus paid the price for man’s sin.

Gabriel continued, “Daniel, in 70 weeks from the decree

¹ Daniel 9:25

of Artaxerxes, there will be an end to sin, atonement for wickedness will be complete, and Messiah will come, bringing everlasting righteousness to establishing His kingdom.”

Gabriel’s phrase, **“to seal up vision and prophecy,”** meant that, were Israel faithful during the allotted time, the unconditional vision and prophecies given to Daniel and John would never have come to pass. The Father would have thrown it all away. God was willing to subject His unconditional prophecy to the conditional prophecy He had given Israel. Therefore, we have two different lines of prophecy operating simultaneously. God said, “Israel, if you do what you have agreed, I will forget *Plan B*. But if not, *Plan B* will be implemented and all I have promised *you* will be offered to others.

This may sound a bit complex, but there is a great misunderstanding among Christians about the role of the Jews in prophecy, and Romans 11 is the culprit. I realize we’re studying the book of Isaiah, but if you don’t understand how to approach Isaiah, you will miss the whole idea of what the prophet was saying.

In Romans 11, Paul introduced a profound concept while addressing Christians in Rome. There were Christians who had a Gentile background and those who had a Jewish background. A schism between the two existed because Christians with a Jewish background tended to interpret Christianity through Jewish glasses. Let me explain.

Jews believed they were, and still are, God’s chosen people; everybody else was an outsider. “We are the ones to whom His law was given. We are the ones to whom He sent the prophets. We are the ones to whom Messiah was promised. Salvation comes through the Jews.” They believed their church was the only true church. Paul was trying to deal with the nationalism Jewish converts carried into Christianity.

At the same time, the Gentiles were ‘pagan-party animals’ who enjoyed the earthly pleasures of debauchery without restraint. All of a sudden, the new Christian church had people

from very diverse backgrounds. This was a ticking time bomb waiting to explode. Paul had his hands full trying to resolve the issues between Gentile and Jewish converts.

In Romans 9:2–5, Paul showed that Jewish converts have something to be proud of. **“I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”**

Paul was exalting the election of Israel as God’s trustees. But then he said, “I am filled with sorrow that they had this opportunity but squandered it. I am so sad that my brothers cannot accept Christ. It makes my heart sick.”

Verse 6–7, **“It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary.”** He then recounted that Abraham had two sons: Ishmael and Isaac. And God said, “It is not through Ishmael that my promise and covenant will be sustained. It will be through the child of faith, Isaac, because those born of faith will inherit the earth.”

After exalting the Jewish newcomers to Christianity, Paul shocked them by saying, “Being a descendant of Abraham means nothing. It is the lineage of faith that means everything.” God’s plan was to take the descendants of Abraham and make a nation eager to share God’s love.

Romans 10:1–3, **“Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish**

their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.” Paul described how frustrated he was that his own people did not understand the purpose for which they were called.

In Romans 10:12–13, Paul said, **“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”** He said of the Jews, “How can they call on one they have not believed in?” And then of the Gentiles, “How can they believe in one they have not heard?” Paul was speaking to Jewish and Gentile converts alike. Lineage meant nothing because it didn’t contribute to a faith experience. If we are unwilling to go, be, and do as God directs, we are not living by faith. And those who don’t live by faith are not part of God’s kingdom.

* * * * *

Sometimes God’s way of revealing himself to men is done in shadows because they invite scrutiny. The book of Hebrews shows how the entire ceremonial system in the Old Testament is a shadow of the reality found in heaven. As we look into the ways of God, we begin to comprehend the depth and breadth of God’s affection and love for mankind.

God offered Israel an extraordinary but conditional scheme (*Plan A*). This included the exaltation of Jerusalem to be the center of God’s government. God offered national honor to Israel if they would conform to His will through faith. The story of Israel is the story of mankind’s rebellion. However, God was not thwarted; he set up an unconditional scheme (*Plan B*) to accomplish His goals. That is the plan we are operating within today.

Many Christians are seriously misled and confused, believing that all God promised through Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah remains to be fulfilled. They also accept that God erected the Christian church. So the only way He can fulfill the remaining promises to Israel is to remove the church. This makes a

rapture necessary. The reasoning is that once the church is removed from earth, God can resume fulfilling His promises to the Jews. This misunderstanding is widely accepted, preached, and promoted, but it's not true. The truth of Scripture states, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. The root problem is misunderstanding how God gave these prophecies and promises to Israel but never fulfilled them.

If we read from Exodus through Deuteronomy, we repeatedly find that God said, "He will only fulfill His part, His obligation, if Israel is faithful." The conditional element is the word *IF*. God says, "If you will be my people, then I will be your God. But if you agree to be my people and then break my covenant, I will deal with you for violating my covenant and ruining my good name." The history of Israel is the history of every nation. It is the history of every church. It is the history of mankind.

In Romans 11, Paul expounded that just because you're biologically born of Abraham does not mean you are considered Abraham's offspring. It is only when you live by faith as Abraham did that you are reckoned to be a child of Abraham. Abraham's first son, Ishmael, was produced by human effort. Ishmael is just as much a son of Abraham as Isaac. Furthermore, Ishmael was entitled to the birthright. Abraham even asked the Lord to let the birthright, blessing, and covenant go to Ishmael. But the Lord said, "No, I'm not going to do that. I will bless Ishmael and give him all he needs, but the son you receive by faith is the offspring through which my covenant will be conveyed."

In Galatians 3:29, Paul said, "**If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**" Paul was stressing the difference between the indulgent carnal ways of Gentile converts, with the arrogant religious ways of Jewish converts. Both extremes were in the church.

Romans 11:2 states, "God did not reject His people, Israel. The promises of God are still intact." Combine that with

Romans 11:26, “All Israel will be saved.” Today, many Christians read these words and rationalize that God will still do everything He intended and promised to Israel. Well, God has done what He promised, and He will accomplish what He intended, but in a different way under *Plan B*.

Under *Plan A*, there was going to be a resurrection. Under *Plan B*, He will do the same. This time, though, it will be at the second coming. Under *Plan A*, God would have sent out the children of Israel as ambassadors to announce His kingdom’s establishment upon the earth and call whoever would come. This would have happened at the end of the 70 weeks. But it didn’t.

Under *Plan B*, God will send 144,000 out to do the same during the trumpet judgments before the second coming. What could *have happened* and *will happen* have parallels but are not identical. Christians today, generally, don’t understand this simple concept. The result is a distortion of Scripture and prophecy that produces wrong conclusions. There is no pre-tribulation rapture or conversion of 144,000 Jews.

In Romans 11:13–15, Paul concluded, **“I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection [of Christ] brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”**

Those who put their faith in God are the children of Abraham. Those who live by faith are the children of God, just as Isaac was conceived as a result of faith. Paul said, “Because the Jews have rejected Messiah, God threw open the doors.” Jesus has now given the gospel commission to all who believe in Him. Jesus said, **“Go ye therefore unto all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all of the things I have commanded you.”**¹

¹ Matthew 28:19–20

Paul stated, “The hardening of the heart that has taken over Israel and the rejection Israel experienced means the world has been reconciled through Christ and will now hear about God’s love.” He continued, “Because of this, I make all the noise I can, even among my own people.” Paul’s great desire was that Israel, his nation and race, would have a change of heart and receive Messiah.

In verse 16, Paul cleverly used an Old Testament concept to quash the egos of Jewish believers. **“If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.”** The nation of Israel was to be a light unto the world. It had the covenants, the patriarchs, the prophets, and the law—they had it all—and God had chosen them to be firstfruits of His great harvest.

As Paul was admonishing the Jews, he was also warning the Gentiles. **“If some of the branches have been broken off, and you [Gentiles], though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.’ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.”**¹

These verses are pertinent to understanding the book of Isaiah. In the metaphor, Jesus is the vine and believers are the branches. The point being raised is that some of the old branches represent Jews who have lived by faith as Abraham did. Paul then tells the Gentiles that they can be grafted in like

¹ Romans 11:17–22

the Jews, but would be cut off too if they failed to live by faith.

When Paul wrote in verse 26 that **“All Israel will be saved,”** he was referring to all *people* who live by faith, not just Israel. God intended Israel to be a nation with open doors. Immigration to Israel was solicited. “Come join us, be grafted into the olive tree that flows with the power of the Spirit.” However, Israel became selfish, exclusive, and institutionalized. It lost its connection with God and wandered into apostasy.

* * * * *

In Isaiah 27:12–13, the Lord said, **“In that day the Lord will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, Israel, will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.”** If you understand *Plan A*, this language makes sense.

Isaiah 28 displayed Israel’s condition and its upcoming punishment. Speaking about the leaders of Israel, God said, **“And these also stagger from wine and reel from beer: Priests and prophets stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine; they reel from beer, they stagger when seeing visions, they stumble when rendering decisions. All the tables are covered with vomit and there is not a spot without filth. ‘Who is it he is trying to teach? To whom is he explaining his message? To children weaned from their milk, to those just taken from the breast? For it is: Do this, do that, a rule for this, a rule for that; a little here, a little there.’”**¹ God was saying, “The leaders of Israel are drunk and irrational in their thinking. They have reduced religion to rules of: *do this and don’t do that*.

Verse 11, **“Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people.”** God will speak through foreigners when necessary. At the end of time under

¹ Isaiah 28:7–10

Plan B, the 144,000 will come from all tribes, nations, and languages. These servants will even speak to Christians, condemning them for their faithless deeds and actions.

Verses 16–17 say, **“So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic. I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.’”**

In ancient times, to construct a large building, the first stone placed was the cornerstone from which the rest would be erected. The stone had to be perfectly square so all angles and measurements would be straight. The Lord promises to build a religion based on himself, the true cornerstone. Anyone who trusts in His religion will never be dismayed.

Because we live in a carnal world, man’s ways tend to degenerate, and governments follow. It is inevitable. It is the norm. God said through Isaiah, “The day is coming when I will establish a government where justice is the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line.” These two construction devices ensure all actions are square and true. God continued, “Before I can build my government, I will bring terrifying judgments upon the world.”

Isaiah said, **“The Lord will rise up as he did at Mount Perazim, he will rouse himself as in the Valley of Gibeon—to do his work, his strange work, and perform his task, his alien task.”**¹ God’s strange work and alien task refer to exercising His wrath.

Isaiah 29:6–7 describes this wrath. **“The Lord Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire. Then the hordes of all the nations that fight against Ariel [Jerusalem], that attack her and her fortress and besiege her,**

¹ Isaiah 28:21

will be as it is with a dream, with a vision in the night.” The attack would come to nothing.

* * * * *

Let’s begin this section with Isaiah 30. I hope you will read Chapters 24–36 to enjoy the poetic language God used. There is so much good, hope, and encouragement in these chapters. Even though God was about to destroy His own city, it is amazing to witness how His discipline is tempered with love.

Isaiah 30:19–26 reads, **“People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’ Then you will desecrate your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, ‘Away with you!’ He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows. The oxen and donkeys that work the soil will eat fodder and mash, spread out with fork and shovel. In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill. The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the Lord binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.”**

Suffering the corporate punishment God brings upon the world will be a topic Christians contemplate during the seven trumpets. Many will ask, “Why do I have to go through this?” The appealing feature of the rapture doctrine is that God isn’t going to inflict punishment on those who have unintentionally sinned. But Isaiah makes it clear that the righteous must also

experience and endure God's wrath. There is a good reason for this.

Before the rise of sin, the angels had never known God's wrath. Still, to this day, no one has ever seen the wrath of God exerted without mercy. The closest example would be the flood in Noah's day. The only time the world will experience God's wrath without mercy will be the seven bowls. There are two differences between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. The seven trumpets are redemptive in nature, whereas the seven bowls are totally destructive. God will show no mercy when the seven bowls are poured out because the wicked knowingly reject the Holy Spirit.

The redeemed however will not be harmed. They will have been sealed. The saints who remain alive until Christ comes will have firsthand testimony concerning God's wrath. Having experienced His wrath mixed with mercy and seen His wrath at full strength, they can give firsthand testimony in why faith and confidence in God is essential.

Isaiah 31:1, **“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord.”** It is man's nature to trust in the work of his own hands. That is why God forbade Israel's kings from having multitudes of horses and chariots; He knew they would place their confidence in themselves.

In the near future, we will experience the necessity of putting our faith and confidence in God. Even in His wrath, we will have to cling to God to the point of death.

CHAPTER 7



The Carnal Heart

The book of Isaiah dramatically reveals God's great love for His children. In this chapter, we'll begin with Isaiah 33:1, which sounds very much like a riddle. **“Woe to you, destroyer, you who have not been destroyed! Woe to you, betrayer, you who have not been betrayed! When you stop destroying, you will be destroyed; when you stop betraying, you will be betrayed.”**

The Israelites did not have the same understanding of the Devil as we do today. They understood about a destroyer—the adversary of man—and Isaiah 14 tells how Lucifer was cast down, so they knew about his actions, but they didn't understand Satan as we do.

The language in Isaiah often seems to be applied on two levels simultaneously. There is a present-tense application with respect to time, and then the application where God deals in the future tense. For example, the Bible said, “You will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon.” This could be used

as a taunt against Nebuchadnezzar on the present-tense level; but in its future-tense application, the real king of Babylon, Satan, is being referred to. We know it is Lucifer, the angel, one of the anointed cherubs. The Bible therefore brings out that Nebuchadnezzar's behavior and Lucifer's behavior are almost identical.

As long as Hezekiah was humble, he was a good man and honored the Lord; but then he became vain. He was the king of Israel, and in his arrogance, *Israel* was the world. When Hezekiah became proud, God dealt with him. Consider this parallel: Jesus told his disciples, "When you have seen me, you have also seen the Father." He is saying that whatever is in God's mind is reflected in the spiritual mind. Conversely, whatever is in Satan's mind is reflected in the carnal mind.

If you are reading along in your own Bible, you will see how Isaiah used poetry as a literary device to exaggerate issues that need emphasis, similar to a political cartoon today. It is the same kind of art. They both allow the unspoken to be said.

Verse 1 says, Israel would be destroyed. God had already predicted that the Assyrians would bring judgment upon the northern ten kingdoms, and Babylon upon the southern two. God grants all kingdoms a period of dominance which soon fades.

God shows in verse 15 that no matter how corrupt the government, or how evil the world becomes, it is imperative that His people hold to His standard of right-doing. When social infrastructure becomes so corrupt and greedy, God says, "It is not good for man to live in this."

I had a missionary friend who went to Ghana, Africa. He was appalled at the corruption that went on in conducting business. Evils like this infuriate God because they are counterproductive to the social structure. When a government and its agencies become corrupt, the whole economy languishes. Those running the system are only interested in how they can benefit. They don't care about the people. The carnal mind is

so warped. This is the state of mind in the United States today. It was precisely the state of mind in Israel.

The Bible states, “Those who walk righteously and speak what is right, who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes, who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil—they are the ones who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress. Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them. Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar.”¹

In order to live together in peace forever, there has to be an internal code of ethics. If this code is not present, eventually distrust, anger, hostility, and war will result. Six thousand years of earth’s history prove this.

God has established what it takes to live joyfully for eternity. Many look at God’s ways and decide, “He is just being a bully.” The truth though is, in His infinite wisdom, He knows exactly what it takes for us who have the power of choice to live together in perfect harmony. And with these principles written in our hearts, we are candidates for eternal life. This is what God constantly emphasized to Israel.

From Isaiah 34:1–4, we can see that God has a day of reckoning in which he will deal with Israel and the world. **“Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it! The Lord is angry with all nations; his wrath is on all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will stink; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.”**

Verse 8, “For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of

¹ Isaiah 33:15–17

retribution, to uphold Zion's cause." This indicates it would take, under *Plan A*, about a year for God to finally and completely destroy the wicked and establish His kingdom. Under *Plan B*, the seven last plagues only require about seventy-five days. Events in *Plan B* will be much more accelerated than in *Plan A*. In *Plan B*, Jesus will come to destroy the wicked, resurrect the righteous, and take them back to heaven for a thousand years before creating a new heaven and earth.

These two verses were meant to be an encouragement. **"Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.'"**¹ God was going to bring His vengeance and justice upon the world. During the seven last plagues, God's people will hide from the wrath poured on the wicked.

In Isaiah 35:8–10, God was going to make it possible for all who wanted to be a part of His kingdom to come from their respective nations. **"And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away."**

Some people are offended when I talk about how easy it is to obtain salvation. For some reason, they want it to be complicated. I have always believed that salvation is easy to obtain if we really want it. The Lord is willing to remove any obstacle to bring us to Him. The problem is the carnal heart. The mystery is, how do we change it?

The story in chapter 36 began to unfold around 705 BC

¹ Isaiah 35:3–4

when Hezekiah was the king of Israel, and Sennacherib was the king of Assyria. Sennacherib was going through the land to take control.

Starting with verse 4, Sennacherib's chief of staff had surrounded the city of Jerusalem. He said to Hezekiah's representatives, "[You go tell Hezekiah] **This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours? You say you have counsel and might for war—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. But if you say to me, 'We are depending on the Lord our God'—isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before this altar'?**"¹

The text is saying that if you depend on a god, yet a mere man can remove and destroy this God's altar, how powerful can a god like this be?

When Gideon defeated the Midianites, he went into town and pushed down his father's idol. The next day, when the men of the town found out what Gideon had done, they wanted to hang him. But Gideon's father said, "If Gideon can come and push our God's idol down and break his head off, what kind of a god is this? Let him defend himself if he is a god."

The idea was, "If he can't even care for himself, how can he take care of us?" This was what the Sennacherib's messenger was asking.

In verse 8, the chief of staff says, "Come on guys, let's make a deal. Here is the offer: come out and fight, and to make it fair, I'll give you two thousand horses if you can find enough men to ride them. But even if I do this, you won't repulse my field commanders even though Egypt is helping you. Furthermore,

¹ Isaiah 36:4-7

the Lord himself told me to march against your country and destroy it.” Now, the last part wasn’t true, but it sounded frightening. The lie was meant to destroy their confidence and faith.

The story continues, **“Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah [Hezekiah’s representatives] said to the Assyrian chief of staff, ‘Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it well. Don’t speak in Hebrew, for the people on the wall will hear.’ But Sennacherib’s chief of staff replied, ‘Do you think my master sent this message only to you and your master? He wants all the people to hear it, for when we put this city under siege, they will suffer along with you. They will be so hungry and thirsty that they will eat their own dung and drink their own urine.’”**¹

The chief of staff was telling Hezekiah’s subjects to get rid of the king and open the doors to the city so they could be spared. Hezekiah was in a dilemma. He didn’t know what to do.

“Then the chief of staff stood and shouted in Hebrew to the people on the wall, ‘Listen to this message from the great king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Don’t let Hezekiah deceive you. He will never be able to rescue you. Don’t let him fool you into trusting in the Lord by saying, “The Lord will surely rescue us. This city will never fall into the hands of the Assyrian king!” Don’t listen to Hezekiah!’”²

Jump to verse 18, **“Don’t let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, ‘The Lord will rescue us!’ Have the gods of any other nations ever saved their people from the king of Assyria? What happened to the gods of Hamath and Arpad? And what about the gods of Sepharvaim? Did any god rescue Samaria from my power? What God of any nation has ever been able to save its people from my power? So what makes you think that the Lord can rescue Jerusalem from me?”**³

Out of despair, Hezekiah tore his clothes and put on

1 Isaiah 36:11–12 NLT

2 Isaiah 36:13–16 NLT

3 Isaiah 36:18–20 NLT

sackcloth and ashes. He was familiar with the effects of a siege. The whole city knew precisely what would happen. When Hezekiah's officials gave their report of the situation, it made him even more frightened. So, while they were desperately trying to figure out what to do, Hezekiah presented his problem to the Lord.

About that time, Isaiah came in and said, "Tell Hezekiah, this is what the Lord says, 'Do not be afraid of what you have heard. I am going to put a spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country. There, I will have him killed.'"¹

Verse 30, **"Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Here is the proof that what I say is true: "This year you will eat only what grows up by itself, and next year you will eat what springs up from that. But in the third year you will plant crops and harvest them; you will tend vineyards and eat their fruit.'" "**²

Verse 32, **"For a remnant of my people will spread out from Jerusalem, a group of survivors from Mount Zion. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!"**³

Because the king of Assyria had insulted the God of heaven, **"That night the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned [home] to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there. One day while he was worshiping in the temple of his God Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with their swords. They then escaped to the land of Ararat, and another son, Esarhaddon, became the next king of Assyria."**⁴

1 Isaiah 37:1,5,7

2 NLT

3 NLT

4 Isaiah 37:36-38 NLT

King Hezekiah had started out as a good man. He tore down the idols of other gods and destroyed the altars erected for worshiping Baal. But when the enemy came, Hezekiah was in a helpless situation. The Lord however rescued him.

Isaiah came in and said to Hezekiah, “God is going to give you this sign,” and proceeded to describe the planting and harvesting schedule for the next three years. This is significant because it is the only place in the Bible where the Jubilee cycle transition time is described. This is a 49/50-year event.

It is important to know because when the Jubilee Calendar is studied, the year this event happened is 703 BC—a Sabbath year—year 49, the last year of a Jubilee cycle. This means 702 BC is a Jubilee year—a Sunday year—year 50, the first year of a new Jubilee cycle.

In Isaiah 37, God called attention to their need for reformation. As mentioned earlier, Hezekiah started a reformation but didn’t carry it far enough. Later, God put to death 185,000 soldiers because He had been insulted. This is a miracle of epic proportion totally outside the realm of normal. I have often wondered, under *Plan B*, if the censer is thrown down in response to a great insult that might come from a NATO event, a religious event, or something more globally encompassing. Only time will tell.

The significance of Chapter 37, however, is that when Sennacherib was attacking Jerusalem, Isaiah went in and said, “This year you will eat what grows by itself because it is a Sabbath-year rest.” Before this, Israel had not been observing them. It was the reason they were being punished in the first place. The part of the story that needs to be emphasized is that the synchrony of the jubilee calendar is confirmed.

* * * * *

In Isaiah 38, we learn of the marvelous deliverance God bestowed upon Hezekiah. In 2 Chronicles 30, Hezekiah has become king of Israel, reigning from Jerusalem. When I say

Israel, I'm referring to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The northern kingdoms were decimated. Hezekiah was exerting great effort to bring Israel back from apostasy into a saving relationship with God.

2 Chronicles 30:6 begins, **“At the king’s command, runners were sent throughout Israel and Judah. They carried letters that said: ‘O people of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he will return to the few of us who have survived the conquest of the Assyrian kings.’”**¹

Hezekiah had figured out that the 12 tribes were experiencing God’s wrath because of their apostasy, and he was doing his best to bring Israel into conformity with God’s will. In this respect, Hezekiah gets an A+.

He continues, **“Do not be like your ancestors and relatives who abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and became an object of derision, as you yourselves can see. Do not be stubborn, as they were, but submit yourselves to the Lord. Come to his Temple, which he has set apart as holy forever. Worship the Lord your God so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. For if you return to the Lord, your relatives and your children will be treated mercifully by their captors, and they will be able to return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful. If you return to him, he will not continue to turn his face from you.”**²

The hand of the Lord was upon Hezekiah and blessed him immensely. 2 Chronicles 31 and 32 show that Hezekiah put forward, potentially, the finest reformation in all of Israel’s history. He did a tremendous job of causing a change of heart and mind in the people.

In verse 20, “[When Sennacherib’s army had surrounded the city in a siege,] **Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to God in heaven.**

¹ NLT

² 2 Chronicles 30:7-9 NLT

And the Lord sent an angel who destroyed the Assyrian army with all its commanders and officers. So Sennacherib was forced to return home in disgrace to his own land. And when he entered the temple of his God, some of his own sons killed him there with a sword.”¹

Because of this incredible display of salvation, many neighboring countries brought offerings and valuable gifts to Hezekiah. The Bible says, **“From then on King Hezekiah became highly respected among all the surrounding nations.”²**

Then, at the end of chapter 32, the king came down with a deadly illness. **“He prayed to the Lord, who healed him and gave him a miraculous sign. But Hezekiah did not respond appropriately to the kindness shown him, and he became proud. So the Lord’s anger came against him and against Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself and repented of his pride, as did the people of Jerusalem. So the Lord’s anger did not fall on them during Hezekiah’s lifetime.”³** This is a part of Hezekiah’s story that doesn’t often get told.

After God honored Hezekiah—referring to when God killed 185,000 enemy soldiers—everybody thought Hezekiah was well connected; that he had a direct line to the creator of the universe. Afterward, Hezekiah became highly exalted among all the surrounding nations because Assyria was a threat to everybody, not just Israel. Suddenly, when Hezekiah’s God intervened and wiped out that roaming threat, surrounding nations viewed Hezekiah as a divine king. Remember, Sennacherib’s chief of staff had boasted about the gods of all the other nations he had conquered.

Now let’s go back to Isaiah 38. Hezekiah was ill, and **“The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: ‘This is what the Lord says: “Set your**

1 2 Chronicles 32:20–21 NLT

2 2 Chronicles 32:23 NLT

3 2 Chronicles 32:24–26 NLT

affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness.”¹ Isaiah was the same guy who told Hezekiah that God would deal with Sennacherib. But now he was telling the king, “You’re going to die. Put your house in order. You will not recover!”

On the surface, this may sound harsh of the Lord. One could conclude that Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and wept because he knew he would die and didn’t want to die. What Isaiah doesn’t tell us, though, is that Hezekiah had gotten *too big for his britches*. Hezekiah had become so arrogant that he became useless. This is a good object lesson. Bible inferences need to be in context. One verse can’t explain the whole picture. 2 Chronicles 32 tells the rest of the story.

Hezekiah was in his bed dying and grievously repentant to the Lord. **“Then this message came to Isaiah from the Lord: ‘Go back to Hezekiah and tell him, “This is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears [of your repentance]. I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. Yes, I will defend this city. And this is the sign from the Lord to prove that he will do as he promised: I will cause the sun’s shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz!’” So the shadow on the sundial moved backward ten steps.”**²

People speculate that the Lord moved the Earth or the Sun, but I disagree. I think God moved the shadow. God can move a shadow without disrupting the whole momentum and equilibrium of the universe. This is not a problem for Him.

Photographers can mimic this effect using a “gobo” between a light source and their subject to project a shadow. Moving the light moves the shadow. I believe the brilliance of God’s presence overpowered the sun’s light to create this effect. Read Genesis 1 for another example. The light of God’s presence *lit*

¹ Isaiah 38:1 NLT

² Isaiah 38:4–8 NLT

up the world before the sun, moon, and stars were created. At least one would infer that from the story.

Incidentally, Hezekiah became one of the few who knew how many days he had left to live. How sobering. After being healed, Hezekiah wrote: “**In the prime of my life, must I now enter the place of the dead? Am I to be robbed of the rest of my years?**” I said, ‘**Never again will I see the Lord God while still in the land of the living. Never again will I see my friends or be with those who live in this world. My life has been blown away like a shepherd’s tent in a storm. It has been cut short, as when a weaver cuts cloth from a loom. Suddenly, my life was over ... My eyes grew tired of looking to heaven for help. I am in trouble, Lord. Help me!**’”¹ This is quite touching. Hezekiah sincerely had a change of heart.

In chapter 39, after Hezekiah’s miraculous recovery, the king of Babylon sent him a gift. When the Babylonian envoys arrived, Hezekiah committed the most stupid blunder. He believed their flattery and showed them all the riches in his treasury. This says a great deal about his lack of humility.

A man with money has a very different attitude than a man without money. The rich man doesn’t need others; he is independent; he has an attitude and lifestyle that puts him in the opposite situation of the man who is desperate and dependent on others to make ends meet. A man with no money concerns and one with severe financial problems have very different lifestyles.

When a man with a lot of money becomes humble, he doesn’t immediately take on the mindset and lifestyle of a poor man. After being financially well-off, that pattern of living life becomes a part of his being. When Hezekiah became a humble man, he didn’t magically transform into the guy who had been struggling. Instead, when the envoys from Babylon showed up, Hezekiah lost his humility. Many in his own nation deified him; they saw him as being next to God. To the Babylonians, he

¹ Isaiah 38:10–14 NLT

was the divinely protected king whose God had killed 185,000 Assyrians. Because the Babylonians hated the Assyrians and had never been able to kill that many soldiers, they were in awe that Hezekiah's God had done it in one night!

Hezekiah should have shown them his health as proof of God's favor, but instead, he gave them an idea to take back to their king: "Here is a pot of gold; all we have to do is swoop down and take it. We may have to wait for him to die; I'm not sure we want to attack him yet. But after he's gone, we could make a lot of money with little effort." And that is precisely what happened.

By this time, I'm sure Hezekiah had ambivalent feelings about Isaiah. Think about his interaction with Isaiah thus far. Isaiah pops up and says, "God will destroy the Assyrians." The next time he sees Isaiah, he is told, "You're not going to recover from your illness." Then, the next time Hezekiah sees him, Isaiah says, "God is going to give you fifteen more years to live."

In Isaiah 39:5, Isaiah appeared and spoke to the king, **"Listen to this message from the Lord of Heaven's Armies: The time is coming when everything in your palace—all the treasures stored up by your ancestors until now—will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left,"** says the Lord. **"Some of your very own sons will be taken away into exile. They will become eunuchs who will serve in the palace of Babylon's king."**¹

Pay close attention to Hezekiah's response. **"Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, 'This message you have given me from the Lord is good.' For the king was thinking, 'At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime.'"**² What a terrible shame. All Hezekiah was worried about was himself. He didn't care what happened to the nation. He didn't care because he had fifteen good years left. But after he was dead, he didn't care what happened. He sounds like the typical politician today.

¹ Isaiah 39:5-7 NLT

² Isaiah 39:8 NLT

My take on this story is that Hezekiah was a good man. He was also an evil man in several ways. God appreciated the good in Hezekiah. He did tear down the altars of Baal and bring some level of restoration to Israel. But Hezekiah dropped out of the school of sanctification. That is the real problem in his story. Hezekiah reached a level of religious commitment that satisfied himself and then stopped growing.

Hezekiah was unlike King David, who never plateaued. David made some stupid mistakes, yet to the very end, he loved the Lord with all his heart, mind, and soul. On the other hand, Hezekiah demonstrated his egocentricity. He was only concerned about himself. He even put his twelve-year-old son, Manasseh, on the throne to co-reign as king. Manasseh, a spoiled brat and evil man, led the people into the grossest of sins until its slippery slope finally took over all Israel.

In Isaiah 40, Isaiah makes a number of prophetic statements that would apply to the children of Israel in the coming days. **“‘Comfort, comfort my people,’ says your God. ‘Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and her sins are pardoned. Yes, the Lord has punished her twice over for all her sins.’”**¹ This would be a promise of encouragement for God’s people who went into Babylonian captivity.

The language of this verse is similar to Revelation 18. **“Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her. For her sins are piled as high as heaven, and God remembers her evil deeds. Do to her as she has done to others. Double her penalty for all her evil deeds. She brewed a cup of terror for others, so brew twice as much for her.”**² God has paid her back double.

Isaiah 40:3 contains even more parallel language. **“Listen! It’s the voice of someone shouting, ‘Clear the way through the wilderness for the Lord! Make a straight highway through the wasteland for our God!’”** This sounds very much

¹ Isaiah 40:1–2

² Revelation 18:4–6

like what John the Baptist wrote in the New Testament, **“I am a voice shouting in the wilderness, ‘Clear the way for the Lord’s coming!’”**¹ These verses are snapshots of events in *Plan A* put to music so that Israel could take courage as they sang.

Isaiah 40:5, **“Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The Lord has spoken!”** This poetic statement is a prophecy that compares to Revelation 1:7, **“Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him—even those who pierced him.”**

Isaiah 40:10, **“Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in power. He will rule with a powerful arm. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes.”** We see the same language in Revelation 22:12, **“Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds.”** Again, we can see from these few examples that *Plan A* and *Plan B* have strong similarities.

Isaiah 40:17, **“The nations of the world are worth nothing to him. In his eyes they count for less than nothing—mere emptiness and froth.”** Under *Plan B*, when he strikes down the nations, as recorded in Revelation 16 and 18, the term means, they are worthless.

Verse 23, **“He judges the great people of the world and brings them all to nothing. They hardly get started, barely taking root, when he blows on them and they wither. The wind carries them off like chaff.”**² In *Plan B*, the timing is about the same for the ten rulers Satan will appoint. About the time they take root, the words of Jesus’ mouth will blow them away.³

Jump to verse 28, **“Have you never heard? Have you never understood? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to**

1 John 1:23

2 Isaiah 40:23–24

3 Daniel 7; Revelation 17

the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”¹ God designed these little prophetic statements as memory verses to strengthen His people.

Go to Isaiah 41:1, **“Listen in silence before me, you lands beyond the sea. Bring your strongest arguments. Come now and speak. The court is ready for your case.”** This *Plan A* event parallels Revelation 20 under *Plan B*. At the great white throne judgment scene, all nations will come before God. All the wicked will be resurrected. Satan will then lead them to challenge God for the holy city, but He will destroy them.

Verse 2, **“Who has stirred up this king from the east, rightly calling him to God’s service? Who gives this man victory over many nations and permits him to trample their kings underfoot? With his sword, he reduces armies to dust. With his bow, he scatters them like chaff before the wind. He chases them away and goes on safely, though he is walking over unfamiliar ground. Who has done such mighty deeds, summoning each new generation from the beginning of time? It is I, the Lord, the First and the Last. I alone am he.”**² Jesus was saying, “I am the alpha and omega.”

Now verse 8, **“But as for you, Israel my servant, Jacob my chosen one, descended from Abraham my friend, I have called you back from the ends of the earth, saying, ‘You are my servant.’ For I have chosen you and will not throw you away. Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”**³ God gave this counsel and encouragement because His people seldom

1 Isaiah 40:28–31

2 Isaiah 41:2–4

3 Isaiah 41:8–10

understand His ways. Still, they can hold onto clearly stated promises, though they may not comprehend the whole picture. Even though we don't understand all He is accomplishing today, these statements should also give us the confidence to persevere.

Verse 21, **“Present the case for your idols,’ says the Lord. ‘Let them show what they can do,’ says the King of Israel. ‘Let them try to tell us what happened long ago so that we may consider the evidence. Or let them tell us what the future holds, so we can know what’s going to happen. Yes, tell us what will occur in the days ahead. Then we will know you are gods. In fact, do anything—good or bad! Do something that will amaze and frighten us. But no! You are less than nothing and can do nothing at all. Those who choose you pollute themselves.’”**¹ God is saying, “I am the God of Israel, and yet, all of you insist on worshiping these useless idols.”

In Isaiah 42:6, God implored His people, **“I, the Lord, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will take you by the hand and guard you, and I will give you to my people, Israel, as a symbol of my covenant with them. And you will be a light to guide the nations. You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons. I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols. Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I will prophesy again. I will tell you the future before it happens.”**²

God is showing that we may not understand everything He does. And this is especially true when we're suffering. In these dark times He implores us, “Trust in me. I know what I'm doing. My plans reach beyond one generation, beyond one lifetime. You have to choose to put faith in me. Review my history and know that I am trustworthy. Am I not worthy of

¹ Isaiah 41:21–24

² Isaiah 42:6–9

faith? Am I not worthy of your confidence? Am I not worthy of your love and respect?”

Isaiah 42:21, **“Because he is righteous, the Lord has exalted his glorious law.”** This verse means it pleased the Lord to reveal how we are to properly live with Him for eternity.

Skip to verse 24, **“Who allowed Israel to be robbed and hurt? It was the Lord, against whom we sinned, for the people would not walk in his path, nor would they obey his law. Therefore, he poured out his fury on them and destroyed them in battle. They were enveloped in flames, but they still refused to understand. They were consumed by fire, but they did not learn their lesson.”**¹

I will close this chapter with two points. First, in each of these couplets (poetic, prophetic statements), we learn a great deal about God’s overall administration of earth. In the last verse, God said, “They would not respect me, love me, or follow my laws, so in burning anger, I poured on them the violence of war.”

Second, if we apply the ways of God to our lives and the world around us, our appreciation for the book of Isaiah will grow.

Hopefully, you are reading Isaiah in your own Bible and contemplating its message.

¹ Isaiah 42:24–25

CHAPTER 8



Earth's Cup of Iniquity

Isaiah is an extensive book, so we have been tasting each chapter, focusing on those portions of Scripture that reveal God's love, ways, and plans as only He can express them.

When studying the Bible, we can't rush through it. We have to approach God's Word thoughtfully, carefully, humbly, and systematically.

Since it took Isaiah around fifty years to write his book, studying it should also take considerable time. I am constantly amazed at the readability of the Book of Isaiah. He tries to find the words to express God's love, care, and plans for us. I'm not sure how he originally wrote it down, but somehow, it was preserved through the ages so we could have the opportunity to read it.

Let's begin this chapter by finishing up Isaiah 42.

In verse 18, God said, **"Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one in covenant**

with me, blind like the servant of the Lord?”¹ God asked this because He chose Israel to be His servant, representative, and goodwill ambassador to all mankind. And yet, the verses read like He was talking to a child.

Verse 20, **“You have seen many things, but you pay no attention; your ears are open, but you do not listen. It pleased the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious. But this is a people plundered and looted, all of them trapped in pits or hidden away in prisons. They have become plunder, with no one to rescue them; they have been made loot, with no one to say, ‘Send them back.’ Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention in time to come? Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers? Was it not the Lord, against whom we have sinned? For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law. So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.”²**

Speaking of anger, I mentioned the abomination that causes desolation in the previous chapter. What could be the insult that would make God so angry as to trigger the casting down of the censer predicted in the book of Revelation?

When Antiochus carried a hog into the temple and offered it on the altar in 168 BC, the Jews considered it *the abomination that causes desolation*; it ignited the great Maccabean revolt from 168 to 165 BC. Antiochus hated the Jews—and the feeling was mutual—it was an act of pure meanness.

When God looks at the entire world, He is deeply offended when mankind commits violence. He is profoundly hurt when a murder takes place. God will respond when acts of violence fill earth’s cup of iniquity. My study of the Old Testament convinces me that God does not necessarily step into action

¹ Isaiah 42:18–19

² Isaiah 42:20–25

right away when He is offended. Instead, it's more like the tiny straw that breaks the camel's back. The last drop in the cup that makes it overflow is what trips the trigger.

In Isaiah's day, Israel had gotten so far away from God that He could no longer get their attention, lead, or instruct them. They had become useless. I don't know which of their sins made the cup overflow, but the warning of *a full cup* is throughout Isaiah. Finally, God sprang into action.

In Isaiah 42, God poured out His anger; yet in the violence of war, notice how He turned around in Chapter 43 and became compassionate and forgiving. **“But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, “Do not hold them back.” Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by my name.’”**¹

Verse 10, **“‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior. I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—I, and not some foreign god among you. You are my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘that**

¹ Isaiah 43:1-7

I am God. Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?”¹

Chapters 43–47 read as if God came down to introduce himself to a people who had never met Him and had no idea who He was. Verse 15, **“I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel’s Creator, your King.”** This is Jesus speaking to His people through Isaiah. Verse 18, **“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”**

If you turn from your evil ways, I will relent and not destroy you. I will forget the past and cover your sins so they will never be seen again.

“Yet you have not called on me, Jacob, you have not wearied yourselves for me, Israel. You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices. I have not burdened you with grain offerings nor wearied you with demands for incense. You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices. But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses. I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more. Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence [if you truly are]. Your first father sinned; those I sent to teach you rebelled against me. So I disgraced the dignitaries of your temple; I consigned Jacob to destruction and Israel to scorn.”²

God was frustrated. What is a parent to do with a child whose heart is so filled with rebellion that it cannot be corrected? That was the condition of their entire country.

God said, “I will blot out your transgressions for my own sake, not yours.” They didn’t care. He was the one with the broken heart. He was willing to forget everything that had

¹ Isaiah 43:10–13

² Isaiah 43:22–28

happened and start over with a clean slate. Apparently, His people were not willing.

As we move through Isaiah, remember that this message was being delivered over a period of time, and Israel was not responding. In emergency-room terms, the EKG was flat. Israel's heart was not beating. God was trying to find a pulse. He was using emergency measures to get Israel's heart to beat. But the devil had come in and deadened all of the senses so that no amount of stimulus worked.

Go to Isaiah 44:1–3, **“But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.”**

God was saying, “I can't save this generation which is beyond help, but I will begin anew with the next one.” The Lord promised to give Israel a chance, but it wouldn't be *this* Israel. The Israel to whom God gives an opportunity under *Plan B* is a different Israel than *Plan A*. I use the illustration of how God brought one Israel out of slavery into the wilderness, but that is not the same Israel taken into the Promised Land. The parallel is that the Israel chosen to be a light to the world in the Old Testament is not the final Israel.

The Lord said in Isaiah 44:6, “[I am] **Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.**” Compare this with what Jesus says in Revelation 1:8, **“‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’**” Both verses are identical. It is the same person, Jesus.

In Chapter 44, God condemned Israel because they yearned to worship idols. I have often wondered why religious people wanted a tangible god in ancient times. Do you have the desire

to carve a piece of wood into a god? I think I have found the answer to this puzzle. It is only an opinion, but it answers the question for me.

Israel had a religious economy. It encompassed a God who was so large they could never fully understand Him. This required a level of integrity and honesty that was impossible without being born again. If you haven't had the born-again experience, living with an omnipresent and omniscient God is torturous.

Israel found that the gods of the pagans were a lot more fun than the God who was everywhere but unseen. For example, the god Baal encouraged sexual immorality, drunkenness, and gluttony. Its very core was centered on self-indulgence. On the other hand, the unseen God doesn't permit those behaviors. He requires sobriety and fidelity, responsibility and accountability.

In today's world, most Protestants don't worship images, so how do they express idolatry? Christians today have created their own god, but call Him Jesus. This is not the Jesus portrayed in the New Testament, although they claim it is. They do this so they can justify their actions. Jesus said, "Those who love the light come into the light so that their deeds might be seen for what they are."¹ They are open to truth and reality. Baal was simply a manmade god. The Jews in Isaiah's day prostituted themselves to these pagan gods which fed their carnal nature.

Most preachers from Aaron onward have been cowards. I say this because if a group is large enough, preachers will do whatever is politically expedient. If that calls for creating a golden calf, so be it. Most preachers readily avoid the tension that comes from rebuking sin. This creates a problem for God: mankind's carnal nature coupled with a weak clergy.

If a preacher were to learn a new truth, have a change of heart, and share it from the pulpit, he should be prepared to be rebuked by the flock. But preachers don't like to be naked and

¹ John 3:21

exposed as Isaiah was. To bear Isaiah's burden for fifty years of ministry was an enormous undertaking. And had it not been for God's power, Isaiah could not have endured.

Likewise, in the end time, the 144,000 will be ridiculed, scorned, rejected, and persecuted like no other group. Many, if not all, will be killed in the line of duty.

At the end of Isaiah 44, God predicted that Jerusalem would be destroyed and reinhabited, and the towns of Judah would be rebuilt—its ruins restored.

Verse 28, **“Who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, ‘Let it be rebuilt,’ and of the temple, ‘Let its foundations be laid.’”**”

This prophecy regarding Cyrus was given one hundred and seventy-five years before his birth—his name already recorded by Isaiah!

Moving on to Isaiah 45, we find the chapter full of political intrigue and secular politics.

“This is what the Lord says to his anointed [chosen], to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I

bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.”¹

Next, I want to discuss three points. (1) God called and appointed Cyrus before he was born; He did the same thing with Jeremiah. He also had a plan for our lives before we were born. (2) Cyrus thought it was his prowess that achieved the success he had experienced. In reality, God did all the work; Cyrus was just a good servant. (3) When God said, “I create light and darkness; I bring prosperity and create disaster,” He meant it.

In Isaiah 45, God gives a prophetic statement of how Cyrus would provide the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. God had chosen him to accomplish His objectives even though Cyrus did not acknowledge Him. When God chooses us, He bestows talents and gifts within us that align with His will. God has provided mankind with various skills and abilities to sustain the human race. For example, He has given some the desire to understand the human body and work with sick people. He has made others to be engineers, bakers, musicians, and even comedians.

When we use God’s gifts to the best of our ability, we accomplish His plan and purpose for our lives. And if we give our hearts to the Lord, we can achieve even more of God’s will because of the concept of *Plan A / Plan B*. *Plan A* is always the higher ideal. *Plans B, C, and D* are still within His will but the pinnacle of achievement is reduced with each successive plan.

Even though Cyrus did not acknowledge God, he nevertheless came to see his prophetic role in God’s will. He was honored to make the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in 536 BC. Now don’t mistake this for the decree mentioned in Daniel 9 involving the 70 weeks.

In Isaiah 45:7, there is a concept that frustrates people, depending on the translation. The verse from the King James Version reads, **“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”** It is

¹ Isaiah 45:1-7

easy to see why this verse is controversial. The King James' Old English is not the English spoken today. Its definition of evil is quite different from how we would use the word.

The same verse from the New King James Version reads, **“I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things.”** The NIV expresses the verse as: **“I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.”**

If we focus on the word *evil*, we can't reconcile that word with a righteous God. And that's where the problem rests. God did not create evil. God is not responsible for evil; Lucifer is. God is responsible for giving His creatures the power of choice, and a law that defines evil. It was Lucifer's choice to sin. Adam and Eve made the same choice and became responsible for their own undoing. Let me explain.

Many people don't know the King James Version of the Bible was organized in 1611. Fifty scholars from Oxford translated the KJV, which is essentially Tyndale's translation of 1524. Our contemporary King James Version has had 500+ changes since the original 1611 edition was published. And the New King James Version has had even more changes than the KJV. Next, we have the NIV, which is my favorite. This translation uses a whole new approach for interpreting the original manuscripts. I'm emphasizing that the use of language changes.

The issue is, God says, “I create disaster. I will bring the sword against Jerusalem.”¹ Now, Ezekiel 14:21. **“For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments—sword and famine and wild beasts and plague—to kill its men and their animals!”**

God is taking responsibility for sending destruction upon Jerusalem to kill its rebellious people. He is initiating this calamity which would be viewed as awful, even evil. But it is not

¹ Isaiah 45:7

the same as saying God created sin. See the difference?

You can't take one verse of Scripture and develop a doctrine, especially when other verses say the opposite. This is the difference between the fanatic (zealot) and the disciple. A disciple (pupil) constantly weighs the evidence to reach a supported conclusion. Conversely, the zealot is looking for a proof text to confirm his belief and, in blind foolishness, insists this one text fully satisfies the question.

But you can't hang everything on one nail. How would you like to build a house using one nail? The wind could easily blow it down. It's a silly notion. Yet people will build their house of theology on one verse.

Notice what Jesus said next. **"It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts. I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the Lord Almighty."**¹ He is going to do it out of the goodness of His heart.

Isaiah said, **"Truly you are a God who has been hiding himself, the God and Savior of Israel."**² God works invisibly behind the scenes. Wherever you go, He is there.

Verse 17, **"But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting."** In the time of Christ, the Pharisees applied verse 17 to themselves. They understood that many of Isaiah's prophecies pertained to the restoration of Jerusalem, and saw themselves as the people of God who had gone through the retribution of His judgments and restored.

The Pharisees were a sect within Judaism committed to pleasing God. They were afraid of His wrath and zealous to obtain righteousness but pursued it the wrong way. They missed the entire purpose of being chosen by God: to share

¹ Isaiah 45:12-13

² Isaiah 45:15

Him with others.

Before Babylonian captivity, Israel worshiped the Baals; after their Babylonian captivity, they worshiped Jehovah. Even so, they went as far wrong after captivity as before it. So the pendulum continued to swing back and forth.

There are three directions of spiritual growth, two of which are useless and harmful. (1) Paganism. Man defines his own god and does whatever he wants. (2) Legalism. Man establishes his own make-believe righteousness. The Pharisees exceeded at this. (3) Faith. Man humbly opens his heart to be led by the Spirit. This third dimension is the most difficult because the Spirit will lead you where you don't want to go. It is scary and unpredictable but ultimately rewarding.

Then God implored, **“I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob’s descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right. ‘Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations. Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.’”**¹

God continued in verse 21, **“Declare what is to be, present it—let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’ All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.”**² This will happen at the end of the millennium. Imagine standing before God!

As I write this, I remember a story a relative shared with me

¹ Isaiah 45:19–20

² Isaiah 45:21–24

of when he was a teen. He had a little sports car with powerful fog lights, and he could turn those lights on when driving on winding roads, and they would really light up the ditches a long way off. Well, one night, he was driving home on a curvy road through the country and thought, "These lights are so powerful. They're lighting the road so well." Then, at that instant, a bolt of lightning flashed across the sky; it lit up the whole heavens. The entire landscape was visible as far as he could see! He told me that he had never felt so humbled. All of a sudden, the fog lights he was so proud of were nothing compared to God's light. That little experience put mankind's fragility in perspective for him.

Israel was chosen to be a light to the world. But when time came to let its light shine, it had no light. God was totally disgusted. He had invested many centuries in this rebellious people to no avail.

The significance of how far light can be seen reminds me of Vietnam in 1969. Even back then, snipers had rifles that could reach 1,500 yards. That is over three-quarters of a mile! Some of their rifles could reach 2,500 yards, which is about one and a half miles. It was documented that the light from one cigarette could easily be seen in the dark at that distance. My point is that light can be seen from a long way off, and God wanted Israel to be a light so that people could see Him from afar.

In Chapter 46, God predicted the utter collapse of false gods. **"Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden. The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary. They stoop and bow down together; unable to rescue the burden, they themselves go off into captivity."** He was saying, "Your idols can't get from one place to the other without being carried by a donkey."

"Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob, all the remnant of the people of Israel, you whom I have upheld since your birth, and have carried since you were born. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain

you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you. With whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?”¹

Verse 9, “Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’ From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do. Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are now far from my righteousness. I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel.”²

The Pharisees read Isaiah and applied it to the religious structure they had made—to the Israel they had defined. But the Israel of God is not defined by man. In fact, the Israel that God had in mind, and the one that the nation had become, were poles apart. Jesus even referred to them as snakes.

It is the nature of religion to make itself the centerpiece of God’s handiwork. Israel assumed the authority to define righteousness. It is the nature of every church to claim it has the truth about God. Every religion exalts itself above all others because it has an egocentric core, and this was true of Israel when Christ was on earth.

Ultimately, religion is all about acquiring power and controlling people. It is very much like government. That is why in Revelation, the seven heads, the seven religious systems of the world, are called seven kings.

Chapters 47 and 48 told God’s people what they needed to hear while in captivity. As this would be studied in generations

¹ Isaiah 46:3–5

² Isaiah 46:9–13

to come, it was designed to be a learning tool so that their history would not not repeated.

Isaiah 47:6 says, **“I was angry with my people and desecrated my inheritance; I gave them into your hand [Babylon], and you showed them no mercy. Even on the aged you laid a very heavy yoke. You said [in your heart], ‘I am forever—the eternal queen!’ But you did not consider these things or reflect on what might happen [to you]. Now then, listen, you lover of pleasure, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.’ Both of these [calamities] will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells. You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, ‘No one sees me [understands my political savvy].’ Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me.’ Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away. A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom; a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you.”**¹

This sounds very much like Revelation 18. **“Give her as much torment and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.’ Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”**²

These verses are talking about the great harlot of Revelation 17 and 18. God is calling His people out so they won’t be destroyed. The language John used comes from Isaiah. The harlot believes she will escape the retribution that is coming.

¹ Isaiah 47:6–11

² Revelation 18:7–8

It is the nature of political and religious organizations to see themselves as invincible. But God says, “Not so. You will receive what is coming to you—there is no way out!”

One last statement before we close this chapter. **“You who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and claim to rely on the God of Israel—the Lord Almighty is his name: I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. For I knew how stubborn you were ... [and] I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, ‘My images [idols] brought them about.’”¹**

God wants the world to know that *He is* who He says. We can make Him out to be something entirely different, but that will only bring about our own ruin.

¹ Isaiah 48:2–5

CHAPTER 9



No More Sin

This is the last chapter of my book on Isaiah. However, I encourage you to read Isaiah 44–66 in your own Bible. Your appreciation of God’s love, ways, and sovereign authority will grow. Seeing how the Word of God connects to every aspect of life is gratifying.

In Isaiah 48:14–15, God says, **“Come together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols has foretold these things? The Lord’s chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon; his arm will be against the Babylonians. I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him [speaking of Cyrus]. I will bring him, and he will succeed in his mission.”**

Isaiah 48:17. **“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you [as every loving parent should], who directs you in the way you should go.’”**

Man thinks he is quite capable of taking care of himself. But what mankind doesn’t understand, or see beyond his own

generation, is that the cumulative effect of sin becomes exponential. Sin's slippery slope grows steeper as time goes by, so the free fall into sin becomes greater.

Verse 18, **“If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the [endless] waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sand, your children like its numberless grains; their name would never be blotted out nor destroyed from before me.”**¹

In verse 20, Isaiah suddenly declared in a prophetic statement. **“Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, ‘The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob.’”** God was speaking of the Babylonian captivity, but the words “Leave Babylon” also refer to verse 14.

In Isaiah and Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar was called *God's servant*. In Isaiah Chapter 45, Cyrus was called *God's anointed*. God had a plan. He can see from generation to generation and knows what mankind will do. God has not put us on earth to simply ride around the sun. We are not to wander aimlessly throughout our lives. There is a purpose for life. Unfortunately, in our sinful state, many of us go through life never understanding that, and to squander and neglect that duty is irresponsible.

God told His people, “Look, if you had just paid attention to me, your peace would have been like a tranquil river flowing endlessly. Your righteousness would have been like the endless waves of the sea.” But Israel failed.

The story of Israel, unfortunately, is the story of mankind. Israel was no more stubborn or hardhearted than the rest of us. The Bible contains a story about a small tribal nation. The Old Testament centers on this nation because it mirrors the ways of mankind. By documenting the history of this small group of people, we can predict what will happen. If we don't read the

¹ Isaiah 48:18–19

Bible with this understanding, we will miss its message.

In Isaiah 49:5, **“And now the Lord says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant [God is talking about his servant Israel] to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength—he says: ‘It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.’”**

God’s purpose for Israel, from the beginning, was that it might bring salvation to all nations. Most Christians have a wrong understanding of Israel’s actual purpose.

Under *Plan A*, at the end of the 70 weeks, God was to set up His kingdom. He was going to send Israel into the world with an invitation to flee to safety. Highways would have been free of obstacles, and rivers dried up. God would have made it easy for those who wanted to be saved to get to Jerusalem.

Verse 16, **“I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.”** The scars that Jesus would pay for redemption will be seen every day.

In verse 19, God was speaking about the land. This oracle begins in verse 8, **“Though you were ruined and made desolate and your land laid waste, now you will be too small for your people.”** The land would have been too small to hold the mass of immigrants from all the nations.

Verse 22, **“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘See, I will beckon to the nations, I will lift up my banner to the peoples; they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their hips. Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed.’”**

Israel was appointed to be a nation of priests. Having been informed of God's mercy and salvation, the world's kingdoms would have come and thanked Israel for sharing His love. This will happen in the earth made new.

What will your response be to seeing Apostle Paul, the man who endured so much persecution, to ensure we had a chance to hear the gospel? What will be your response to those martyred so that the gospel can go forward? And then, what will be your response to those who come to *you* and say *thank you* for sharing the knowledge of God?

Here is a *Plan A* explanation given in majestic terms. **“Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction [the law] will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.”**¹

Verse 7, **“Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have taken my instruction [my law] to heart: Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals [men] or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations.”**²

Proclaiming the gospel always brings insult, ridicule, and persecution. We see it today whenever a whistleblower comes forward to reveal crimes our government should be held accountable for—it is the whistleblower who suffers. The ones who commit the crime aren't punished, but the person who blew the whistle winds up in jail. In an evil world, righteousness is a rebuke.

Verse 11, **“Those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”**

¹ Isaiah 51:4–5

² Isaiah 51:7–8

Verse 17's language parallels the language used in Revelation. **"Awake, awake! Rise up, Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes people stagger."** Verse 22, **"This is what your Sovereign Lord says, your God, who defends his people: 'See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger; from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again.'"**

What are these two verses talking about? What is this cup?

In ancient times, the cup was a symbol of reward or pay-back. For example, if one sows wild oats, the harvest is more of the same. If you do evil, you will receive more in return; not just the same amount, but more than was sown. If one does *stupid* things, a *stupid* tax must be paid.

In Psalm 23, when David said, "My cup runneth over," he meant that the Lord's blessings were literally more than his cup could hold. Similarly, in the book of Matthew, Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, prayed, "Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me!"¹ Jesus knew He would have to bear the bitter consequences of sin.

I bring this up because in Revelation 14:8 the language is quite serious when we understand what it means. This second angel's message says, **"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great city! She made all the nations drink of the wine of her immoral passion."**²

This points forward to when Babylon actually forms because it doesn't exist yet. The parts and pieces that will comprise Babylon are all on the assembly line, but the catalyst that will put them together has not yet occurred. The assembly will commence when God's judgments begin falling. It will happen suddenly and with great authority. The severity of God's judgments will literally blow the world away.

Babylon will be a worldwide crisis government led by

¹ Matthew 26:39

² Revelation 14:8 NET

religious leaders and enforced by political servants. The words “maddening wine” refer to the nations losing their scruples out of fear. Maddening wine will reduce the inhibitions of political and religious forces to make them come together.

The wine of Babylon is a doctrine: “If we force people to do right, God will be satisfied.” This is the framework in which sin-less laws will be implemented. They will force people to capitulate, claiming it is God’s will.

Isaiah 53 is possibly the most beautiful chapter in all of the Bible. It reveals a marvelous God called Jesus. It is prophetic, yet, I can’t fully comprehend some of it. **“He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.”**¹

When Jesus lived on the earth and walked its dusty roads, He looked like you or me. He didn’t travel in a gold-plated chariot with ten thousand angels hovering above. He didn’t ride about waving at crowds. He was just an average-looking guy. The verses use harsh adjectives to describe His suffering.

They say His visage was marred, meaning His appearance was rough and worn by the suffering heaped on Him. This refers to the beatings received while on the way to His crucifixion. God crushed him, yet Jesus didn’t open His mouth to complain. He, instead, went meekly to His death. I wonder whether we really understand what was done to Him. The human body short circuits after too much trauma and goes into shock; the amount of pain one can bear is limited.

What is so profound to me in Chapter 53 is that Jesus gave up His claim to deity. He gave up eternal life. Jesus went all the way to non-existence as a member of the Godhead. When He died on Calvary, His divinity died too. Fortunately, since no

¹ Isaiah 53:2-3

sin was found in Jesus, the Father essentially recreated Him.

Now, understand my statement. I am not implying that Jesus was a created being. I am merely suggesting that when He died, He no longer existed. This begs the question: how did He become alive again? The only answer is, He was given a new life by the other two Gods because of His success.

Isaiah 53 is the Hall of Fame in the Old Testament. Jesus, creator of mankind, as well as heaven and earth, was willing to cease to exist so that we might have the hope of eternal life. What does this say about the love of God? It shows there was no other way we could be saved. That is why He was found worthy. Only one person deserves to be inducted into this Hall of Fame, and His name is Jesus!

Verse 12, **“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”** Under *Plan A*, God indicated it would be a successful gathering of souls.

In Isaiah 54:1, **“Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,”** says the Lord.” God was contrasting Sarah and Hagar in a poetic way.

In that culture, a woman’s value was determined by the offspring she could produce; the more male babies, the better. They didn’t know back then that the male determines the sex of the child. Sarah was the barren woman. She could not conceive, which was shameful, humiliating, and distressing. Conversely, Hagar was the fruitful woman who gave birth to Ishmael.

The Lord’s statement foretells that Zion would be composed of multitudes comprised of the faithful. Isaac was called the son of faith; he was the impossible baby. God was saying, “One

of these days, when Israel gets its act together, the harvest will consist of more Gentiles than Israelites.”

“Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities.”¹

God wanted Israel to understand that He had a glorious plan full of people. God has the gift of hospitality and loves large get-togethers. He isn't content unless His home is full. In John 14, Jesus said, “In my Father's house are many rooms. I go there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you so that you can live with me in my home.”

Isaiah 55:1-3, **“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.”**

God was offering a way of life remarkably different from what we currently understand. He has *work* for us to do in the earth made new, but it is not *work* to survive. This work will bring joy. It will be fun.

That is why the Bible says in verse 6, **“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your**

¹ Isaiah 54:2-3

thoughts.’¹ This was the message Israel was to give to the world.

In verse 11, God said, “[It] **is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.**”

Our privilege is to sow the seed. The gospel is both a demonstration and proclamation of God’s love. It is our privilege to proclaim it, not our responsibility to harvest it. God will bring about the harvest.

Isaiah 56:1–2 mentions the Sabbath. **“Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. Blessed is the one who does this—the person who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps their hands from doing any evil.”**

Now to Isaiah 58:13. God says, **“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”**²

The Sabbath is God’s invitation to an intimate experience every seven days. It is a coming together to establish (and maintain) the oneness that close relationships enjoy.

The fourth commandment expresses the minimum requirement for a relationship with God. It does not exemplify the full experience. Just as *thou shalt not commit murder* does not depict the entire experience of showing compassion to your neighbor. The *not working on the Sabbath* requirement, simply gives you time to enjoy the relationship. The purpose of the

¹ Isaiah 55:6–9

² Isaiah 58:13–14

Sabbath, from the very beginning, was to have an intimate relationship.

In Ezekiel 20, God scolded Israel for desecrating His Sabbath. The earlier chapters of Isaiah talked about human relations: justice, fairness, equity, and uprightness. Then, suddenly, Isaiah cites the relationship between God and man. The first four Commandments involve man's relationship to God. If there is no relationship with God, there is no quality relationship among men either.

Have you ever been stood up on a date? I have. When I was nine, a family friend offered to take me to the coal mine in his 18-wheeler truck to show me how the mine operates; he hauled coal from the mine. Of course, I was beside myself! We were supposed to go at five o'clock on a Thursday morning. I was told to bring my lunch and be out by the road so he pick me up. I was so excited on Wednesday night, I could hardly sleep. I was up at 3:30 to ensure I didn't miss him. I went out at 4:30 and stood by the road with my little sack lunch. After a while, I put my lunch down. Then, the sun came up, and I took my jacket off. By 8 o'clock, I was walking back home, totally depressed. I still remember the letdown sixty years later, like it happened this morning.

The point of the story is that somebody didn't show up. I can understand that picking up a nine-year-old was no big deal in his mind. But he had no idea how important it was to me. In the same way, we have no idea how important the Sabbath is to God. It is essential that we be there on time.

The disappointment would be like going to a party with someone who then leaves with another person. That is what Israel did to God. Israel was invited to the party but, while there, became enamored with other gods. They deserted the God who had rescued, redeemed, saved, delivered, and created them.

The Old Testament expresses God's love, compassion, and forgiveness far more frequently and in more detail than the

New Testament. Yet, the God of the Old Testament is seen as harsh, hardhearted, and cruel. The manifestation of Jesus on Calvary is an unfathomable expression of love, especially when we consider that He tenderly dealt with His own people for 1,500 years beforehand. But the Bible also states, “He came to His own, and His own received Him not... and then they hung Him on a cross to kill Him.”

Isaiah 59:1–2, **“Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”** God is driven away by sin. You really must read all of Chapter 59. It is powerful!

Verse 12, **“For our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God, inciting revolt and oppression, uttering lies our hearts have conceived. So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.”**¹

Israel had degenerated to such a despicable level that God said, “You are beyond redemption. You are worthless. Therefore, I’m going to destroy you. I will save a remnant and start over.” Israel had reached the place where extended mercy had no redeeming effect.

Verse 15 is sobering. **“Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey. The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal**

¹ Isaiah 12–15

as in a cloak. According to what they have done, so will he repay wrath to his enemies and retribution to his foes; he will repay the islands their due. From the west, people will fear the name of the Lord, and from the rising of the sun, they will revere his glory. For he will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the Lord drives along.”¹

In Isaiah 60, we see that under *Plan A*, God had a marvelous plan that Jerusalem would be filled with those who loved the Lord. They would come from every corner of the world. God was talking about what He would have done for Jerusalem.

Verse 17. **“Instead of bronze I will bring you gold, and silver in place of iron. Instead of wood I will bring you bronze, and iron in place of stones. I will make peace your governor and well-being your ruler. No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more.”**²

That sounds like Revelation 21. As we go through these last seven chapters of Isaiah, the parallelisms between Jerusalem in *Plan A* and New Jerusalem in *Plan B* are identical.

In Isaiah 61:7, God doubles the portion given to the righteous AND the wicked. **“For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrongdoing. In my faithfulness I will reward my people and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples. All who see them will acknowledge that they are a people the Lord has blessed.’ I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed**

¹ Isaiah 59:15–19

² Isaiah 60:17–20

me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.”¹

I need to stress that just because you and I love the Lord doesn't necessarily mean we see everything the same. When God divided the earth's population at the Tower of Babel, He first created division by language. At the time, the world spoke one language. He then pulled the world apart into continents, separating each location, and all who inhabited it, from the others.² This is why people and animals are native to particular parts of the world.

The world's nations formed because each genetic pool created dominant genes. The dominant characteristics of each genetic pool created unique races. I have read much material on how the different races came to be. The Bible is very elegant and simple in how God designed it to happen. God wanted to separate the people of the earth so that no one group could control the whole world. He did grant Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome times in which they controlled the *known* world, but that was short-lived, and there were races beyond their control.

Under *Plan A*, those who loved the Lord from all these nations would have streamed into Israel. Because of differences, there would have been a time of healing. This is necessary because of the diversity within different cultures.

The New Testament talks about the Tree of Life having twelve kinds of fruit, bearing one kind each month. The Bible also says, “**The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.**”³ This is describing those from every nation, kindred, tongue, and language gathering to sit and visit in its shade,

1 Isaiah 61:8–11

2 Genesis 10:25

3 Revelation 22:2

enjoying its delicious, life-sustaining fruit. Thus, the healing comes over time.

Being a lover of truth does *not* mean you love everybody and everything. It *does* mean that you are willing to give them a chance. This is what the shade of the Tree of Life is all about. God alludes to this when He says of Jerusalem, **“The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow. You will be a crown of splendor in the Lord’s hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, [which means my delight is in her] and your land Beulah [which means married]; for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married.”**¹

The grandeur God offered Jerusalem could have been possible under *Plan A*. This was written so that future generations, while in Babylon, could understand what God intended to do. Daniel, who lived a few years later and wrote about *Plan B*, received the timetable from the Lord for when all of this will now happen.

But most people are like Hezekiah, “If it doesn’t happen in my lifetime, forget it. I’m not going to worry about it.” I encourage you to read the book of Isaiah. You will get a spiritual, physical, and practical explanation of God’s *Plan A*. You will see His love, compassion, and mercy. God was dealing with the enormity of what is wrong with mankind.

Skip over to Isaiah 64:4. **“Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our**

¹ Isaiah 62:2–4

sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins. Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, Lord; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people. Your sacred cities have become a wasteland; even Zion is a wasteland, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and glorious temple, where our ancestors praised you, has been burned with fire, and all that we treasured lies in ruins. After all this, Lord, will you hold yourself back? Will you keep silent and punish us beyond measure?”¹ This was a hundred and fifty years before these events actually happened, but what a beautiful entreaty to the Lord.

In Isaiah 65, God, speaking of Israel, said. “I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’ All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of impure meat; who say, ‘Keep away; don’t come near me, for I am too sacred for you!’ Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day. ‘See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps—both your sins and the sins of your ancestors,’ says the Lord. ‘Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied me on the hills, I will measure into their laps the full payment for their former deeds.’”²

God was saying, “You mustn’t treat me with disrespect. You

¹ Isaiah 64:4–12

² Isaiah 65:1–7

treat me with disrespect and rebellion, yet expect to be the object of my affection.” God had had His fill of being insulted. This is why, ultimately, in verse 17, God said, **“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”**¹

God is going to start over. Some apply verse 17 to *Plan B*, but it doesn’t work. Under *Plan A*, it worked perfectly because God was going to summon all the nations against a city that never closed its gates—a people living in security. When *Plan A* could not be implemented, God had to destroy Jerusalem. This is why the city Abraham looked for, whose builder and maker is God, turns out to be the New Jerusalem which descends from heaven at the end of the millennium. God will resurrect the wicked after the Holy City is physically upon earth. The Devil will lead them in a war against the city, but God will bring fire down from the sky and burn them up—just as He would have done under *Plan A*.

The parallel between the two plans is fantastic. However, if we don’t treat them as two distinct plans but instead try to merge them into one, we end up with the confusion that is prevalent today. Protestants erroneously apply these events of *Plan A*’s Israel to New Testament’s *Plan B*, but it doesn’t work. It can’t work.

In verse 20, talking about Jerusalem, Isaiah said, **“Never again [in Plan A] will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.”**²

This prophecy foretells that because of what is developing, “He who dies at the age of a hundred will be thought of as a mere youth. He will be resurrected at the appointed time and have eternal life. He who fails to reach a hundred, the

1 Isaiah 65:17

2 Isaiah 65:20

question will be asked, ‘What’s wrong with him? What did he do wrong?’”

There would have been a period between the end of the 70 weeks and the establishment of God’s eternal kingdom. Developments had to transpire at the end of the 70 weeks under *Plan A*: The enlarging of its borders, the organizing, training, and sending out Israel to gather in the nations. This prophecy applies to a later time after the city has been established as God’s throne, but prior to the establishment of eternal life. God had a gradual build-up to the culmination and establishment of His Kingdom in *Plan A*, which does not occur under *Plan B*.

Verse 21, **“They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune.”**¹ Under *Plan A*, children would have been born and raised until eternal life was bestowed.

“Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain.”²

Under *Plan A*, there would have been a time between establishing the city and bestowing eternal life on all who were in the city, and the final destruction of the wicked. Under *Plan B*, the process is different. Three and a half years of Great Tribulation will culminate with the destruction of the wicked and eternal life bestowed upon the righteous. Following this are one thousand years of rest for the earth, while the redeemed, in heaven, examine the records of Jesus’ decision about those who are not saved. Sin will then be destroyed, and a new heaven

¹ Isaiah 65:21–23

² Isaiah 65:24–25

and earth will be created. Conversely, there is no mention of a thousand years under *Plan A*. Sin would have been destroyed, and the earth made new, but the Bible doesn't say over what time frame.

As this book on Isaiah comes to a close, several verses in Chapter 66 need to be mentioned. Verse 1, **“This is what the Lord says: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?’ declares the Lord. ‘These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.’”**¹ This brings the reader back to the fact that there is a Creator.

In closing, verse 12, **“For this is what the Lord says: ‘I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.’ When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the Lord will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes. See, the Lord is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For with fire and with his sword the Lord will execute judgment on all people, and many will be those slain by the Lord.”**² Under *Plan A*, many were to be slain by the Lord. Under *Plan B*, many will be slain by the Lord.

Verse 22, **“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,’ declares the Lord, ‘so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the Lord. ‘And**

¹ Isaiah 66:1–2

² Isaiah 66:12–16

they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.’”

Under *Plan B*, I look forward to meeting with the Lord each Sabbath; and each new month, sitting under the Tree of Life, enjoying the banquet Jesus himself will provide. I enthusiastically await a wonderful time when there will be no more sin, sorrow, sickness, or suffering.

Pray with me. Dear Father in heaven, thank you for your precious Word and the thorough explanation of your plans in its pages. You are revealing to us the final phase of dealing with sin. We live in a world that is in rebellion. We live in a world that is arrayed against us. But we know you have a plan and will soon come to take us home, bringing this world to an end. I pray that not one person reading this will be missing when you gather your children on that day. Thank you for the privilege of knowing you and your plan for us. In Jesus' wonderful name, we pray. Amen!

Larry Wilson began investigating the great truths found in the Bible after his return from the Vietnam War. Although his primary focus was understanding Daniel and Revelation, he taught on many subjects and other Bible books as well. Larry's study led him to conclude that God's plan to save man can only be understood when a person looks at the Bible as a whole. He believed each Bible writer left clues regarding God's plan, and as we become acquainted with these clues and how they interconnect, we then can begin to understand the full meaning of God's grace, love, power, justice, and mercy.

Isaiah ministered between 739 and 681 BC. He died approximately seventy-five years before Babylon took Israel captive. This is important because of what God says to His people through Isaiah. I believe the Book of Isaiah is about Plan A, while the Book of Revelation is about Plan B. It is crucial we understand the two plans. They use many of the same elements and similar speech, but insurmountable problems are created when details of Plan A are forced onto Plan B because the two plans are two thousand years apart.

Under Plan A, Jesus would have established His kingdom on earth and brought in people from surrounding nations. In Plan B, Christ appears and suddenly speaks the nations out of existence by the sword that comes out of His mouth. Under Plan A, Christ would have come as a babe, just as He did in Plan B, and He would have died for the penalty of the sins of the redeemed.

Wake Up America Seminars (WUAS) is a nonprofit, nondenominational organization. It is not a church, nor does it have members. Our mission is to proclaim the imminent return of Jesus, and provide study materials so that people can study the Bible for themselves and understand God's Plan to save mankind.

