

Bible Study # 50
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Major Prophets Series—Isaiah 36—49

This particular portion **provides a historical inset into the main theme of the book. It gives us events in the life of Hezekiah and the invasion of Judah. It gives Hezekiah's subsequent illness and healing.** Throughout the book we **have an emphasis on the promises of God.** This historical inset, as it were, serves an appropriate place for faith-building realities of God's promises. It gives us some insights into what God does and the way He does it.

In chapter 40, a new section of the book opens up. The critics call it "Deutro Isaiah"—a second Isaiah. Critics have a problem with chapters 40-66. There is a prophecy concerning Cyrus, a king of the Medes and Persians. He was prophesied to come on the scene. They could not accept this, and the alternative is to say that it was written after the fact. One of the problems the critics have is acknowledging the fact that there is a God who rules in the kingdom of men (Daniel 4:17) and declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). Those prophecies are introduced with the statement, "Here is the proof that the God of heaven is far above all idols because He declares the end from the beginning." Prophecy is a proof that God exists. It singles out that this could not have been written on the human level. A person obviously changes certain methods of style and expressing oneself. We don't express ourselves always in the same way. The subject matter varies and the time of his life that it was written varies. Why should it be surprising that there are certain variations in that way?

Chapters 36 and 37 deal with the Assyrian invasion of Judah, Hezekiah's reaction to that invasion and God's deliverance.

Chapter 38 deals with his illness and his subsequent healing.

In chapter 39, we see what ultimately proved to be a mistake in terms of Hezekiah's dealing with the Babylonian ambassador.

Chapter 40 deals with a commission that God gives to this work—to His end-time work—to speak comfortably to Jerusalem and to prepare the way before Jesus Christ.

Chapter 41 focuses in on the fact that prophecy is a proof of God. God's greatness is contrasted with the puniness of man.

Chapter 42 continues to focus in on the coming of the Messiah. Prophecy is again pointed out as a proof of God and that Christ is coming to magnify the law. This is all brought out in chapter 42.

Chapter 43 deals with the regathering and the redemption of Israel.

Chapters 44 and 45 show how God will ultimately pour out His Spirit upon Israel. It also has a prophecy of Cyrus and the greatness of our Creator is praised.

Chapter 46 again points out prophecy as a proof of God.

Chapter 47 deals with what is actually Rome or the Catholic Church, as you will notice here.

Chapter 48, we see a prophecy that points out that modern Israel uses the name of God but is not really practicing what is preached. They will ultimately be punished and then redeemed. Chapter 49 shows that God will not abandon Israel. They will be regathered from their captivity from the entire earth. They'll prosper and increase under the government of God.

We come to the 14th year of King Hezekiah, which we would date as 701 B.C.

Isaiah 36:1, "Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them." The Assyrians had previously invaded and conquered Northern Israel. The process of deportation had been ongoing. The Assyrians returned now in the 14th year of Hezekiah and invaded Judah. They very quickly overran the nation of Judah and came to the point of laying siege to Jerusalem. They very quickly overran the whole land. They wanted to intimidate the Jews into surrendering the nation and Jerusalem without a fight. They began to tell them, 'Look, you'd better surrender.' We see the representative of the king of Assyria trying to intimidate them.

Verse 4, "Then the Rabshakeh said to them, 'Say now to Hezekiah, "Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: 'What confidence is this in which you trust?'"'"

Verses 6-7, 'What are you going to depend on to defend yourself from me? Why there is nothing you can depend on! You depend on the Egyptians; they are not going to do it. You depend on your God and He is not going to do it. Didn't Hezekiah just get through tearing down all these altars?' Of course, what the Assyrians didn't understand was God didn't want all those altars. God wanted to be worshiped in spirit and

in truth (John 4:23; Joshua 24:14) there in Jerusalem.

Verse 10, “Have I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said to me, ‘Go up against this land, and destroy it.’” He said, ‘God wants us to come here and destroy this land. Why, we’re here doing God’s will.’

About this time a couple of Hezekiah’s servants came out.

Verse 11, “Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joab said to the Rabshakeh, ‘Please speak to your servants in the Aramaic language....’” They asked the Rabshakeh (the Assyrian’s representative), ‘Why don’t you speak to us in Aramaic rather than Hebrew?’ Aramaic was the common language of diplomacy throughout the Middle East at that time.

What it amounted to was the representative of the Assyrian king was down below the city wall, everybody was gathered up there, and they were “all ears.” He was trying to sap their confidence and undermine their faith; therefore, he was speaking in Hebrew because he wanted all the people to understand him. He wanted those who were up there to hear and understand so they could go and spread the rumor. He was hoping this would undermine any credibility King Hezekiah had, and they would surrender without a fight. Hezekiah’s servant asked, ‘Why don’t you speak to us in Aramaic?’ He didn’t want to do that; he wanted to intimidate them.

Verses 16-17, “Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: ‘Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards’.”

‘Why, we Germans have your best interest at heart. We are going to give you the Millennium, German style. We’re concerned about you Jews. We have some nice cattle cars out here that we’re going to load you up into and we’re going to take you to this nice place. We have this nice place in mind for you. Just surrender and come out; you can sit under your own vine and under your own fig tree.’

Now that expression is only used a couple of other times in the Bible. It’s used once to refer to the time of King Solomon (1 Kings 4:25), and the other time it’s used is in Micah to refer to the

Millennium (Micah 4:4). Solomon’s reign was a type of the Millennium.

It is a descriptive phrase to describe what it’s going to be like in the Millennium. It’s going to be a time of peace and prosperity. So, in effect, they showed up and said, ‘We will offer you the Millennium our style.’ Kind of sounds like the thousand-year Reich. It’s kind of funny how some of the tactics and inspiration that Satan has given to those who have done his bidding have not changed. He usually tries to present some sort of a counterfeit of what God promises. ‘We will take you to a nice place.’ Sure they will!

Verses 18-20, ‘Your god can’t deliver you.’

In Isaiah 37, word came to Hezekiah and he went to the house of God.

Verses 1-4, he was very concerned and had been deeply praying to God about this whole matter.

Verses 9-13, Hezekiah received a letter that laid out all kinds of accusations and demanded unconditional surrender.

Isaiah 37:14-17, “And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. Then Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying: ‘O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, who has sent to reproach the living God.’”

In effect, when Hezekiah got the letter, he went into the temple, laid it before God and said, ‘Look, You can read this. You see what they are saying. They are comparing You to the gods of the nations. Now truly they have triumphed over all these nations, and those nations’ gods couldn’t deliver them because they are really no gods. You are the Creator God.’ He really besought God and earnestly talked to God. God sent word to Hezekiah by Isaiah that said, ‘I will take care of this; I will intervene in your behalf. I will defend this city.’

Verses 35-36, “‘For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.’” Then the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.” The dead corpses didn’t get up and discover they were dead. It was the people who were alive who got up the next morning and saw the 185,000 soldiers (the army

of the Assyrians) who had died the night before.

Verse 37, “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh.” KJV, “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.” You can just imagine! He got up the next morning, started calling for his servant and nobody came. You can visualize in your mind how mad he must have gotten that nobody was there to bring him whatever it was that he wanted. He walked out of the door and what he saw was dead soldiers lying around—everywhere he looked he saw dead soldiers. I would suspect that he departed and went away and returned—all three of them—about as quickly as he could get on a horse and get out of there. He was “high-tailing” it.

Verse 38, when he got to Nineveh, he went in to worship in the house of his god. His sons came in and assassinated him. He had been saying some derogatory things about the God of heaven earlier and he found out very quickly who was able to deliver whom. He was challenging the armies of the Living God.

We see Hezekiah’s response. When he was confronted with a problem of this magnitude, Hezekiah went to God. He recognized that the source of our solutions, the source of our health, is God. He went to God in faith and in confidence.

Isaiah 38:1, “In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the Lord: “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.”’” Isaiah came in and told him, ‘You had better get things in order because you’re about to die.’ Josephus tells us that these were the last three days of this Assyrian siege of Jerusalem. Interestingly enough (we know this from history and from Josephus), the night the Assyrian army died was the night of the Passover. The death angel passed through the camp, and guess who wasn’t under the blood of the lamb? The Assyrians! It was the same as the Egyptians many centuries earlier (Exodus 14:26-28). It was in the context of the Passover that God intervened and wiped out the Assyrian army. And it is also in that same context that God healed Hezekiah.

Have you ever seen that “when it rains, it pours”? Everything that can go wrong happens at the same time. Hezekiah must have felt like that. Realize that we read it and think, ‘Boy, wasn’t that great! Hezekiah had faith!’ And we got right

on. But you realize this thing had been building for months and months. The Assyrians had been sending ultimatums. They had been invading other nations. They had invaded Northern Israel much earlier, and God had spared Judah.

Hezekiah had been serving God. Remember the story of his great Passover—the most tremendous observance of the Passover since the days of Solomon (2 Chronicles 30). Since that had happened 12-13 years earlier, all this had been going along for a period of years. Now the Assyrians invaded and began to pour through the land. As a few weeks went by, they overran more and more of Judah. They went down and smashed the Egyptians. Then they came back up and brought both armies together to come against Jerusalem.

Don’t you think all through these months and now, particularly, in the last few weeks, Hezekiah has really been praying and crying out to God for deliverance? The Assyrians kept overrunning more and more until they finally overran the whole land. They had Jerusalem surrounded. They put siege around it and then began waging this psychological warfare to wear down and discourage the people. Then to top it all off, right at a moment like that, Hezekiah gets sick—really sick. He “takes” to his bed. God’s servant, Isaiah, finally comes in and says, ‘I have bad news. You’re going to die, so you had better just get your affairs in order. You’re going to die of this.’

Hezekiah must have been feeling pretty low about that time. He began to really cry out to God. He went to God with it. He besought God for His intervention in terms of healing. God intervened, healed Hezekiah and that evening wiped out the Assyrian army—that evening of the Passover. That was a tremendous intervention that God performed.

We need to recognize as we go through some of these things, Hezekiah lived through his trial the same way you and I live through ours—one day at a time. When it’s over and we look back on it, we know how it turned out and it seems simple enough as time distances us from it. But when you’re in the midst of it and you haven’t read the end of the story yet, you don’t know exactly what will happen; you only know by faith.

Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” It is fundamental to our relationship with God.

Verse 6, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him,” Hezekiah stands out as an

example of faith—an example of one who looked to God and trusted God, and God performed a tremendous miracle. God added 15 years to the life of Hezekiah.

Isaiah 38:5-6, “Go and say to Hezekiah, “Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; and I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city.’””

All of a sudden, all at one time, the whole thing began to break. But can you imagine how Hezekiah must have felt. He must have felt like the whole world was caving in on him at the same time. Here were the Assyrians about to lay waste to the city, and he was about to die. And where was God? God does not always step in at the moment that we think that He should do so. God chooses His time.

God worked a tremendous miracle here, and there were actually 15 Psalms added to Scripture, Psalms 120—134. These are termed the “Psalms of Degrees” or the “Psalms of Ascents,” as each one is entitled. Psalms 120—134, there are 15 of them.

Isaiah 38:20, Hezekiah said that he would establish songs that would be sung, “...with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.” This would refer to sacred music, music that we would refer to as Psalms. The 15 Psalms of Degrees are considered to be added by Hezekiah at this time.

In Isaiah 39, we find that even people of faith and those close to God sometimes make mistakes. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silent (Ecclesiastes 3:7). We can sometimes say things we would be better off not saying.

The king of Babylon sent an ambassador to Hezekiah in the aftermath of Hezekiah’s illness. The Babylonians were glad to see what had happened to the Assyrians because the Assyrians were threatening them. Hezekiah wanted to impress this visiting representative, so he showed him through the temple treasury and the palace treasury. He really kind of “laid it on thick,” which in the long run was not a very smart idea because the Babylonians took note of what wealth the Jews had—which they hadn’t realized before. In a later generation (when Nebuchadnezzar ruled), they remembered it and decided that Jerusalem was worth attacking after all.

Verses 5-7, God warned him of that and told him that it would eventually happen that way. We

should not seek to go around and impress other people. It will ultimately lead to problems.

This ends this inset. This inset is, in a sense, to bolster our faith, to encourage us and to point us to the reality of God’s fulfillment of His promises.

A new section opens up. We begin to get back into prophecy.

Isaiah 40:1-3, “Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. ‘Speak comfort in Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.’ The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

We find part of the mission of this work defined here in verse 3. It refers to John the Baptist who prepared the way for Christ’s first coming. That statement is quoted in reference to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3). It would also be in reference to the work that God has done through this work—through the Philadelphia era of His Church—to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare [make ready] the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” What is it that should be said as we go out with the gospel message? Let’s notice an interesting statement that we over the years have taken to perhaps refer to Radio Jerusalem.

Verses 9-10, “O Zion, you who bring good tidings, get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, you who bring good tidings, lift up your voice with strength, lift it up, be not afraid; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’ Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.” Here is the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God.

‘You who bring good tidings (the gospel) lift up your voice with strength. Broadcast it to the cities of Judah with strength.’ This gives the impression—and we have sometimes taken that as a possible indication—that there would be, before the end, a broadcast going forth from Jerusalem announcing the gospel to the cities of Judah.

It’s interesting. You know, God has a time scale and a time schedule. I remember very clearly, and many of you will remember back in 1967, I received a co-worker letter in the end of May where Mr. Herbert Armstrong was telling of the

exciting news that he had just signed a contract with Radio Jerusalem. In fact, it was the largest contract in radio history with King Hussein of Jordan. At that time, the old city of Jerusalem was under Arab/Jordanian rule. We were to begin a broadcast on Radio Jerusalem, and it was to begin on Pentecost of 1967. He was actually going to fly to Jerusalem and make that first broadcast live. I remember where I was when the Six Day War broke out and I heard the news.

Mr. Armstrong was on his way from Ambassador College in Bricket Wood, England, to the airport. He was in transit in a car on his way to the airport, ready to board a plane and touch down in a couple of hours in Jerusalem. Then he was to go in and make that live broadcast. It was within a matter of just a few hours, from the time that the broadcast was to go out, that all of a sudden, just like that, a war broke out which lasted six days. Interestingly enough, it ended prior to sunset on Friday evening. It was an incredible event that totally changed the complexion of the Middle East. That portion of Jerusalem was no longer under Arab rule. All of a sudden, the Jews had taken the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Sinai. You name it and they took it.

We all thought that we were on the verge of Isaiah 40:9 being fulfilled. Now that has been a few years ago—23 years ago. It was not yet God's time to accomplish this prophecy in 1967; we thought it was. The doors had opened, everything had fallen into place and we thought this prophecy was on the verge of being fulfilled. It came within about five hours of being fulfilled. But it wasn't God's time. God is the One who opens doors and no man can close them when He opens them. But He is also the One who closes doors and when He closes them, no man can open them (Revelation 3:7-8). I think the time is ultimately going to come when this verse is going to be fulfilled.

From everything that I can see here in verses 9-10, it gives a clear indication that the gospel will be proclaimed from Jerusalem prior to the return of Christ because it says, "Behold your God shall come" or "is coming." That is a statement that is made prior to the return of Christ. He will come. It doesn't say He has come and He's already here. It says He is going to rule. His work is before Him and His reward is with Him. This proclamation that is going to have to be made to the cities of Judah has not really gone out. It has not really reached them as a warning and a witness yet. God will do so in His time.

Verse 15, as we come down, we focus on the magnitude and the greatness of God, "Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the balance;" All the nations are as a drop of a bucket compared to God. They are like "nothing" before Him.

There is an interesting statement. At the time of Isaiah, the various pagans believed that the earth was flat, that it rested on the back of a great turtle. You have to ask yourself, "On what did the great turtle rest?" They evidently never got that far. The Greeks, Romans, Assyrians, Egyptians and Babylonians all had these crazy ideas.

Verse 22, but Isaiah writing under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit wrote, "It is He [referring to God] who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers," God sits upon the circle of the earth! The word that is translated "circle" is a word that literally means "a sphere" in the Hebrew language. God sits upon the circle or "*chuwg*" of the earth. This is a term that refers literally to "a sphere." He understood under the inspiration of God that the earth was round. The contemporary pagans didn't understand that.

Verse 25, "'To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?' says the Holy One." To whom will we compare God?

Isaiah 41:4, "...I, the Lord, am the first; and with the last I am He."

Verses 21-23, "'Present your case,' says the Lord. 'Bring forth your strong reasons,' says the King of Jacob. 'Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed....'" What is brought out here is that fulfilled prophecy is a proof of God. It is brought out in Isaiah 41 as a means of telling the true and all-powerful ruling Creator God from the idols of men's invention. It is the great contrast.

Here, the critics want to come along and say, 'Well, Isaiah didn't write this part of the book. This was just added in later.' The whole context (the way that it is brought out) is, 'Look, I am telling you things that are going to come to pass afterwards.' Prophecy is a proof.

How do you stick in something like that afterwards and have it accepted? How do you challenge and make an issue out of the fact that you're going to tell things that are going to come

to pass and that's a proof that you speak for God, when you're telling about things that happened 50 or 100 years ago. That doesn't give you any credibility. How does something like that ever get accepted as Scripture? It doesn't make sense! The critics don't think it through. They simply don't want to acknowledge that there is a God who rules in the affairs of men. If they acknowledge that, then they may have to acknowledge the fact that He may have something to say about the way they live and that maybe they had better clean up their dirty little lives. They don't want to do that. The simplest thing to do is say, 'We just discount this.'

Isaiah 42:1-7, then a prophecy of Jesus Christ, "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law.' Thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it: 'I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.'"

As we see here, this is a clear reference to Jesus Christ. A portion of this is quoted in Matthew 12:17-21 and the remainder is quoted in Luke 4:18. It is an interesting reference to God's Servant, to Jesus Christ the Messiah who came in the role of a servant. He did not come trying to lead some kind of great demonstration or reform movement. He was not out trying to overthrow anything. He did not come to change things at that time. "A bruised [KJV, "braided"] reed He will not break." He did not come to fix things then, but He is going to come with justice. And when He does come, "He will not fail nor be discouraged till He has established judgment in the earth." He is coming, "as a light to the Gentiles." He is coming to open the eyes of the blind and to bring out of darkness those who are imprisoned in it. These prophecies and

statements are referred to in the New Testament as a reference to the Messiah.

As we come down, there is another reference to what the Messiah will do.

Verse 21, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable." "He will magnify the law and make it honorable!" That was what Jesus Christ came to do. He fulfilled that on the Sermon on the Mount as well as other places. Christ did not come to minimize the law or do away with the law. He came to magnify the law.

Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill." He came to fill it up. He came to make it complete and full. He came to magnify. That was actually prophesied right here in Isaiah 42:21.

In Isaiah 43, we have a clear reference to the fact that the Lord of the Old Testament is the One who actually became Jesus Christ in the New Testament. Let's pick it up in verse 10 so that there is no misunderstanding on that.

Isaiah 43:10-13, "'You are My witnesses,' says the Lord, 'and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; therefore you are My witnesses,' says the Lord, 'that I am God. Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it [who shall hinder it or turn it back]?"

When it says, "Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me," the word "God" is "Elohim." The "im" ending is a plural ending in Hebrew. When we make any word in English plural, we add an "s." "Elohim" is the term that is used for God referring to the God Family.

Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The word "God" is "Elohim."

Verse 26, later, "...Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness," This clearly shows the use of the plural pronoun. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." We understand that this was a conversation between the One that we know as the Father and the One that we know as the Son, Jesus Christ.

When he says, “Before Me there was no God formed [there was no Elohim formed; there was no other God Family formed], nor shall there be after Me [neither would there be after Him; we are not coming as some other Elohim].” We will be a part of that Family. We will be born into that Family because Elohim is the Family name that, at this point, includes the One who we know as the Father and the One we call Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

In John 1, Jesus Christ is called the Word.

John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word...the Word was God.” There was that unity from the beginning. The God Family consisted of the Father and the Word. We can ultimately be born (born again) into that Family as a son of God. There is no contradiction to what it says here in Isaiah 43:10.

Isaiah 43:11, then the One who is speaking to Isaiah, inspiring these things, says, “I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior.”

Acts 4:12, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Isaiah 43:11 clearly shows that the One who is referred to in Acts 4:12—the One we know as Jesus Christ—is clearly the Eternal, the Lord of the Old Testament and the One who is identified as the Savior. Christ came to reveal the Father. The Father was not the One who had dealt with the Old Testament patriarchs; it was the Word, the One we know as Christ. He came to reveal the Father because they did not know the Father (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22).

Isaiah 44:1-4, “Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the Lord who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you: ‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; they will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses.’” Here we are shown that God is going to pour out His Spirit upon Israel and it is going to cause Israel to flourish like willow trees on a riverbank.

‘I am going to pour out My Spirit upon your descendants.’ That is ultimately going to occur in completion in Tomorrow’s World.

Verse 6, “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.’” There is no Elohim. There is no other God Family. “God” is used here, in that sense, as

the Family name. It refers to the Father and Christ.

In verses 9-11, He talks about the idols and they are ridiculed. He describes how they make this idol.

Verse 12, “The blacksmith with the tongs works one in the coals, fashions it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms. Even so, he is hungry, and his strength fails; he drinks no water and is faint.” He is a human being.

Verses 13-14, “The craftsman stretches out his rule, he marks one out with chalk; he fashions it with a plane, he marks it out with the compass, and makes it like the figure of a man...He hews down cedars for himself, and takes the cypress and the oak; he secures it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain nourishes it.”

Verses 15-17, he cuts down a tree and some of it he uses for firewood to warm himself or as wood for a cook stove to bake bread. Then part of it he takes and makes a god out of it. How silly that is. A guy cuts down a tree. He takes parts of it and builds a fire and takes a part out, carves it out, makes a god out of it and starts bowing down and worshiping it. God says what sense is that? The tree was growing. The rain made the tree grow. You’ve used some of it for productive purposes. Then you carved up some of it, started worshiping it and started thinking that’s your god. That’s pretty silly.

We can drive around, even in our area of the country and see all these little shrines that sit out there in people’s yards. In effect, that’s their god, even though they may not want to express it that way. That’s the way they treat it. They venerate it. They think that’s somehow going to deliver them. They can take the plaster of Paris and make a figurine or this or that for their bookshelf. They make a religious artifact out of it. They stand it up, put all kinds of devotional things around it, kneel down and pray and do the rosary. It’s the same thing. Human nature hasn’t changed a whole lot. People still do the same things.

Verse 28, God begins to address Cyrus, “Who [referring to God] says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’”

Isaiah 45:1-4, “Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—to subdue nations before him and loose the armor of kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut: ‘I will

go before you and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze and cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, who call you by your name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.””

It is very interesting when you go through the story of Cyrus and see all the things that Satan tried to do to prevent this prophecy from being fulfilled. God prophesied what Cyrus would do 150 years prior to the time he would do it. What was Cyrus going to do? Cyrus was the one who put together and united the empire of the Medes and Persians. He went in and besieged and conquered Babylon. That was the night of the handwriting on the wall (Daniel 5:5-6). And he, in turn, issued the decree that allowed the Jews to return from Babylon and go back and rebuild Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).

If you go back into history, you will see that the Persians ruled over the Medes. The Persians looked down on the Medes and ruled over them. This king of the Persians (Cyrus' grandfather) had a dream. In his dream (as it was interpreted), he would have a grandson who would overthrow him and would take his place. He was determined that was not going to happen. When the time came for his daughter to get married, he decided that he would not marry her to anyone who would potentially be a rival to him; he would marry her to a Mede. He would not marry her to a Persian but to a Mede who was subject people. He married her to a son of a Median chief.

He didn't give a whole lot more thought to it. A little later he had the dream again and began to get worried. He found out his daughter was pregnant. He made arrangements for her to come to his palace to have the baby. He decided what he would do—he would take the baby when it was born and would have it killed. He called his servant who he trusted and said, 'Look, when the baby is born, I want you to take it out and kill it.'

The servant took the baby and when he went out of the palace, he couldn't bring himself to kill the baby. He "passed the buck" to somebody else. He gave it to a shepherd who kept some of the royal sheep and told him to take the baby, go and expose it out on the mountain and let the animals kill it. He got himself off the hook where

he didn't have to do the "dirty work" with his own hands.

It just so happened that the shepherd's wife had a child exactly at that same time and the child was stillborn. So, the shepherd got the idea that rather than kill this baby, he and his wife would raise it as their own. They would take their stillborn baby and put it in the basket out on the mountain; the king would never know the difference. They would have this little child to rear—and they did.

Things went on until the child grew to a pretty good size. Eventually, the child found out the story. He went on to rally all the Medes and he led in a Median army. The story of the Persian king's dream had gotten around, and when Cyrus showed up with an army of the Medes, the Persians were so overwhelmed and so intimidated—because they felt like this prophecy was certainly going to happen—they all surrendered without a fight. They all went over to his side because they figured they were doomed. He had escaped death until now and sure enough, his grandfather was out of a job. Now Cyrus was the king of the Medes and the Persians. He became king out of what had ought to be his death.

It's interesting because this story comes from the Greek historian Herodotus about 500 B.C. who wrote a story out of secular history. A pagan Greek historian recorded the story. Even the pagans recognized and even, in effect, testified to the authenticity of the story of Cyrus. Herodotus was a Greek historian who wrote the story of the Persian wars and the history of that empire.

When Cyrus united the Medes and the Persians, he headed for Babylon. Remember the story from the book of Daniel? Daniel 5, they showed up, and Babylon thought that it was impregnable. The Babylonians were feasting and having a big "blowout," a real orgy there in the palace. They were laughing because they said it was impossible for anybody to get in there.

In the meantime, Cyrus had dug a channel and diverted the flow of the Euphrates River so that the water level dropped and dropped. Within a few hours the water level had dropped down so low that he marched his soldiers through the riverbed and under the fortification. The city was thought to be impregnable, but the Euphrates flowed through the midst of it. They had this big iron grating that came down into the water so you could not even sail a boat under the wall. But Cyrus' engineers dug a channel canal to divert the Euphrates. When they broke the dike, the

river began to divert and the water level began to drop. Pretty soon it was below this iron grating that stuck down beneath the wall. The river got so shallow that soldiers just waded through the mud and muck and came right in under the wall. Before daylight dawned, the Persian army was inside and Babylon had fallen without a shot. From being impossible to fall, Babylon fell into his lap. The gates were actually opened. He didn't have to break through the gates. God said the gates were going to be opened.

Isaiah 45:1, "...to open before him the double doors, ..." That's what happened. Cyrus rode through on his horse.

Verse 18, "For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other.'" The word translated "in vain" is the exact same word that is used in the book of Genesis where it describes the creation.

Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; ..." The word translated "without form" in Genesis 1:2 is the word "*tohu*." Genesis 1 tells us that 'God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void.' The earth was "*tohu*" and "*bohu*."

Here in Isaiah 45:18, it says God created the earth and He established it. He did not create it "*tohu*." Genesis 1:2 tells us the earth became that way. Isaiah 45:18 says God didn't make it that way. Something happened between the time God made it and the time we pick up the story in Genesis 1:2. What happened in between was the rebellion of Lucifer that resulted in the destruction, chaos and confusion that came to take place on the earth. This is just an aside that is good to note.

God says He declares the end from the beginning.

Isaiah 46:9-10, "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.'" God says, 'I am God. I can tell you in the beginning what the end is going to be.'

There are people who are all amazed at some of the events that are going on in Europe. Those of us in this room are not amazed at those things. Some of you have been reading the literature and

listening to the broadcast for decades. You heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong say those things decades ago. Why could he do that? Was it just a lucky guess? No! He read the Bible. He believed what the Bible said, "God declares the end from the beginning." God knew the way the 20th century was going to end up, way back centuries and centuries ago. God is able to declare the end from the very beginning and He's able to bring it about. This bothers the critics because that means that there really is a God and He has something to say about the way we should live.

Verse 11, "...Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it." God shows there is none like Him because He alone is able to declare the end from the beginning.

Prophecy, in general, and the prophecies of Christ and His coming, in particular, are proofs of God. God is going to bring these things to pass.

Isaiah 47:1 is a reference to Babylon. It is not referring to the Babylon of old, but to the daughter of Babylon—in other words, the modern-day descendant, which would be modern-day Rome.

Isaiah 47:8, "Therefore hear this now, you who are given to pleasures, who dwell securely, who say in your heart, 'I am, and there is no one else besides me; I shall not sit as a widow, nor shall I know the loss of children'."

Revelation 17:5, remember where we're told of the great whore, "...Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." She had children. She had harlot daughters who came out of her. She was not going to know the loss of children. She didn't think she would, but God describes some of the destruction that is going to come upon that entity.

Isaiah 48 discusses the subject of prophecy.

Isaiah 48:2-3, "For they call themselves after the holy city, and lean on the God of Israel; the Lord of hosts is His name: 'I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.'"

Verse 5, "Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.'" Again it is clearly showing, as it was written, that this was prophetic. It was understood to be prophetic. In terms of prophecy, it clearly pointed out the proof of God.

Isaiah 49:8, “Thus says the Lord: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the people, to restore the earth, to cause them to inherit the desolate heritage.’” Here is a statement referring to the fact, “in the day of salvation.” “The” is not a definite article used in the Hebrew. This is showing the fact that there is not simply one and only one (“the day”) but there is “a day.” There will ultimately come “a day.” There is simply not one day (“the day”), but “a day” of salvation. There is a day that pertains to us and there is a day that pertains to the world that is yet to be experienced.

Isaiah 49 (the latter part) shows that the time for the salvation of Israel is a day of salvation. Today is a day for the Church (1 Peter 4:17), but there is another day. There is a day that is coming, a day of national salvation for Israel that is yet to come. This is not that day right now.

Verse 15, ““Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb?”” He says that He is going to bring back His people.

He describes when Israel is regathered.

Verses 19-20, ““For the waste and desolate places, and the land of your destruction, will even now be too small for the inhabitants; and those who swallowed you up will be far away. The children you will have, after you have lost the others, will say again in your ears, ‘The place is too small for me; give me a place where I may dwell’.””

After the Millennium sets in and as the remnant of Israel is regathered to the Middle East, God describes how the population of Israel will begin to increase and multiply within a relatively short period of time. That little narrow area in the Middle East will begin to be outgrown. Here’s a remnant that is scattered, comes back from captivity and is regathered. It looks like they’ve been destroyed and devastated; yet within a matter of a few decades, the population is increasing and growing to the point that the descendants begin to say, ‘This place is too small. We really need to expand; we need a place to go.’ They are going to spread back. Israel is going to begin to recolonize the areas that God had given them. They will spread back to the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia—to the areas of Israel. That is going to occur in the beginning of the Millennium.

Well, we have focused in on this section of Isaiah. I think you will find the remaining portion

(chapters 50-66) to be especially meaningful for the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread season. There are a number of prophecies that refer clearly to Jesus Christ as the Messiah. There are a number of very meaningful statements. Really, in many ways, the most powerful portion of this book is chapter 53. It particularly deals with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It deals with a number of things that I think will be helpful for us to focus on at this time. This is a good section to read and study during the Passover season. On the next Bible study, we will conclude the book of Isaiah.