

Under The Fig Tree



WEEK 30

Day 1

Isaiah Chapter 31. We, like the Children of Israel, live within the limits of the physical world. If we have come to faith in the God of Israel, we also know that there is infinitely more in Heaven than we experience on earth. Yet, at times of difficulty, we tend to look more at our physical circumstances than live in faith, trusting God. When Isaiah had a vision of the Lord on His Throne, High and lifted up (Chapter 6), he was equipped to deliver his grand majestic Prophecy. He saw the situation of Israel and Judah from God's perspective and was able to contrast the physical reality of the nations with the awesome majesty and power of God.

God knew that His people would be tempted to look for help from the world around them, rather than trust in Him. Soon after Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, even after they had witnessed mighty miracles of deliverance, a brief time of hunger resulted in their wanting to go back to Egypt. Now, Judah was to be exiled to Babylon, so God warned them once more, not to look for help from Egypt. They must look only to God. They may not understand their circumstances, but they were to trust in Him. Even powerful Empires like Egypt and Assyria would fail - one day they would come to nothing. Do not trust in such nations, trust only in God.

The same is true for us today. As the end time purposes of God come upon the world, for a short while there may seem to be safety in allying with powerful nations. We need a vision of God such as Isaiah had, so that we put our trust in Him and not in the frailty of man. Yeshua came to the world to give us this vision and hope, and sent His Prophetic Word to us so that we would prepare for the days ahead.

Chapter 32. Isaiah continued his exhortation not to trust in fallen man. There will be people who seem to be wise but are foolish in God's eyes, and who seem rich but who really are poor. Do not trust in people who do not take counsel with the Living God. Out of pride, they even speak against Him. They are full of deception. Trust in God. One day their kingdoms will fall. Trust in

God and one day He will restore the fortunes of His people. Verses 16 to 20 give a picture of God's people at peace. Chapter 20 is a vision of true freedom in God's Kingdom.

Chapter 33. Here again is an earnest exhortation to trust in God, and to maintain a vision of who He is. This was a vision that Judah took to exile with them. The vision is also for the world today, as we wait for the return of Yeshua to establish the everlasting Kingdom. Isaiah's prophecy was for us as well as for Judah in the days of the Kings. Read the Chapter prayerfully, allowing the Holy Spirit to envision you through the powerful words of Prophecy.

Chapter 34. Now allow the Lord to show you what lies ahead for the nations of the world who reject Him. Over all history, since the days of the Great Flood, God has held back His judgments on the earth. He has used this time to complete His Covenant purposes, calling people from all nations to have faith in Him. This will not last forever. Verse 8 speaks of the *day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion*. Right back in Isaiah's day God spoke these words of warning to all people. He exhorted His people to persevere through the trials of this earth. If they learned to trust in God and not follow the ways of the world they would one day be redeemed. The time of the second regathering of Judah, happening in our day, is a sign that soon God's judgments will fall on all nations. The Prophecy of Isaiah still stands, confirmed through the Words of Yeshua (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, through other biblical Prophets, and in the Book of Revelation). Chapters 33 and 34 are in strong contrast. There is a great message of hope for God's people, despite the trials of this earth. There is also a dire warning to the wicked of the world, and to those who live under great deception.

Day 2

Chapter 35. One is reminded of the shaft of light that came in Isaiah Chapter 9: *nevertheless, the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed...* What a wonderful word *nevertheless* is! Despite all, God is faithful and *will* fulfill all that He has promised. Isaiah prophesied dark days for this wicked world that will turn more and more from Him. He did not compromise His principles of justice for His own chosen people, but through patient and faithful endurance through trials, a family of faith will be saved. They will return to their land and finally live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven. Only endure and believe! To them would be added faithful people from all nations. Isaiah 35 is an encouragement for us all – *be strong and do not fear...your God will come.* Even the land will seem to be glad when its harvests come in abundance again and beauty is restored to the Promised Land. This is a metaphor for the gladness of God and of His people for the spiritual harvest that is also coming. Verses 5 and 6 were fulfilled through the miracles of Yeshua. The *highway of holiness* is the pathway of life for all whom He redeems.

Chapters 36 to 39. Chapters 1 to 35 contain Isaiah's Prophecies up to the time of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a good King and is a shadow of the Messiah. His reign is embedded in the history of the Kings of Judah to give hope for the future. By God's grace, Hezekiah's reign, though threatened by Sennacherib, showed how God will bless His people when they are led in His ways. It was a brief time in Judah's history because no King other than Yeshua would be worthy of ruling and reigning for all eternity.

Read these Chapters and recall the events of Hezekiah's reign. See what the Holy Spirit shows you in the context of Isaiah's prophecies.

Day 3

Chapter 40. *Comfort my people...her warfare is ended...her iniquity pardoned.* Isaiah uses the present tense to prophesy a future event. It was not many years after the reign of Hezekiah that Judah was exiled. When the nation was in exile the nations should have become a sanctuary for her and not oppressed her. The reverse was true. Thinking that they served God, many people have oppressed and persecuted the Jews. This will eventually bring judgment upon these nations. It was sufficient punishment for the Jews to be removed from their land and left as aliens without a country. God knew that this persecution would happen, but the exile would not last forever. Through Isaiah, He showed that the time would come when the exile would end and a faithful remnant would be restored. We must understand this, pray for the restoration of Israel, and lend practical support as the Lord leads. We live in the early days of the final restoration of the remnant of Israel and Judah. Isaiah prophesied concerning this day and also of the coming of Yeshua, whom John the Baptist would announce. Verses 3 to 5 were fulfilled by John the Baptist and will have a second fulfillment prior to Yeshua's return. Read the majestic words of Isaiah's Prophecy, where he contrasts Almighty God with human beings, and ridicules the idols that men make from their own hands. Gain comfort from the promise of Verse 31. Let us be among those who wait on the Lord (bind ourselves to Him). The promise was first given in the context of Judah's exile and is now for all God's people who wait for the return of Yeshua in an alien world.

Chapter 41. God does not harbour grudges. Once He has dealt with Judah's sin He will show His love to His people once more. Once He has cleansed them He will restore them. The darkness and gloom from Isaiah's Prophecy is gradually replaced with new light and new hope. Abraham is called the friend of God (Verse 8) and God remembers this friendship. Because of Abraham's relationship with God, there is a certain plan for His descendants who also live by faith. Israel is God's servant, chosen by Him. Despite the hard days of exile, this will never be forgotten. Once more Isaiah ridiculed the idols of the world. The One True God will, at His chosen time, show His power and majesty. Israel is still a prophetic people and we must observe carefully what God will reveal of Himself through the testimony of His people. This truth, prophesied many years ago by Isaiah, is relevant for today.

Chapter 42. Read this chapter carefully. It was a promise that was partly fulfilled at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah when Judah returned from 70 years of exile. The greater fulfillment is beginning to take place before our eyes today. We can understand this prophecy most fully in context of Yeshua. The exile was symbolic of separation between God and His people on account of sin. Exile from the Land was painful but more painful would be eternal separation from God. Through Yeshua, physical eyes were opened and deaf ears were healed. These were signs of His Messiahship when He ministered on earth. The greater blindness and deafness is spiritual. The greater healing is forgiveness of sin. Through Yeshua, eternal life is promised. Read this Chapter

in the context of Judah's coming exile and return, and also in light of Yeshua and the Eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

Chapter 43. Once more there is a contrast between the foolishness of worshipping idols and worship of the One True God, the Creator of the Universe. Foolish men make idols out of pieces of stick, stone and metal, small fragments of what God has created. Judah must remember the God who chose them and look upwards to the Heavens and not be beguiled by the deceptions of this world. God emphasizes again that He has chosen them as a servant. They are His prophetic people in an alien world. They must remember their calling and remember their God. He will restore the faithful remnant once more. The entire universe will rejoice at their restoration.

Day 4

Chapter 44. God spoke directly to Judah through the Prophet Isaiah. Pause for a moment and consider this. The same God who spoke from Heaven to create the universe spoke in plain language to His people. He continues to speak to us today through the biblical Prophets. Through the inspiration of His Holy Spirit He continues to build us up through their words. We must treasure these words – God spoke to His people from the High Heavens as a father speaks to his children. He spoke also to the nations surrounding Israel. He warned them of their idolatry. When Israel and Judah went to exile Israel was warned not to bow down to the idols of the nations. At the same time the nations were to learn about the God of Israel. The same is true today.

Let us consider what we mean by *the God of Israel*, a phrase we have used over and over again in these notes. It is a title we are using to distinguish the One True God from all other gods. The God of Israel is the Creator of the Universe. He made Covenant with Abraham, choosing the Children of Israel as His prophetic people to bring knowledge of Himself to the entire world. The God of Israel now offers salvation to all who will believe in Yeshua HaMashiach, the Saviour of the world. In ancient days, nations worshipped other gods, often represented by their idols. Israel's God was the One True God. In our day, we realize that the Israel of God are those who live by faith in Him, redeemed through the Blood of Yeshua: physical descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is not sufficient for salvation. All people who join the Israel of God through faith in Yeshua are coheirs with them of the Covenant made with Abraham. We *join* them and do not *replace* them. *The God of Israel* is an appropriate title that reminds us of the way our God first revealed Himself to His ancient people.

Chapter 45. Cyrus was identified before he was born. More than 150 years after this Prophecy was given, the Persian Empire would rise in prominence and Cyrus would become ruler. God knew the future and knew that, at this time, He would cause Cyrus to allow the exiles to return to the Land of Judah. If Cyrus read this Prophecy He would have been amazed at the foresight of the God of Israel. He is called a shepherd, anointed by God for His purposes. Cyrus fulfilled all that God intended. Unlike Pharaoh, at the time of the Exodus, he did not resist God's plan for His people. We will read about this more fully when we study Ezra and Nehemiah. Isaiah's message is like a Gospel message to the nations. Through His dealings with Israel and Judah God was making Himself known to all people, revealing Himself to the leaders of nations. History shows us that the Words of God were not fully heeded. In our day the Gospel message is still going out into the world. Now the call of God is through His Son, Yeshua. Still there is great resistance from the majority of people and the leaders of nations do not take the Word of God seriously. God spoke through Isaiah and His Prophecy is still alive and relevant.

Chapter 46. Here again, God speaks to His people, reminding them of who He is, and of His plans for them. Once more He declares how foolish it is to turn to idols and false gods. He tells them to remember what He has done from ancient days. The Living God, Creator of the Universe chose them, made promises to them, cared for them, and has plans for their future. We, like Israel,

must go over and over the Bible accounts and recall all God has said and done. It is easy to be diverted into the ways of the world and gradually forget our God. When God called us to salvation through Yeshua, He included us in the family of redeemed Israel. Their family history becomes our history through adoption. What God says to Israel is relevant to us as well.

Chapter 47. Here again the contrast is drawn with idolatrous Babylon. This is the empire to which Judah was exiled. They would spend 70 years in Babylon so that they would no longer want to ally themselves with their idols or follow their ways. Babylon itself would then fall. It was a powerful empire in the eyes of men, but God could humble it. Babylon represents all idolatrous nations, including the one world alliance that will emerge in the last days. *Come out of her my people* (Revelation 18:4) is God's command for the last days. Judah in Babylon was a fore-runner of the last days. Just as Babylon fell in the days of Daniel, at the time of the exile, so the last world system will also fall. Isaiah is to be read at two levels. One level applies to the days when God first spoke through him. The other level is for our day. The Words of God are still living and active.

Day 5

Chapter 48. *I have declared the former things from the beginning...suddenly I did them, and they came to pass*, said the Lord. God told Israel that He had foreseen their obstinacy and planned how to deal with it. He planned well ahead, and revealed His plans for them. Why, was He faithful to Israel? The answer is in Verse 9 – *for My Name's sake I will defer my anger*. God continued to plead with His people, so that they will experience *peace like a river, and righteousness like waves of the sea*. Read these chapters carefully and note how the principles of justice and mercy continue to interweave through the grace and faithfulness of God.

Chapter 49. Israel was chosen as God's servant. Isaiah identified himself with the nation – *the Lord has called me from the womb*. As a Prophet, he was also an intercessor, bearing the burden of His people, through identification. As such, he is a shadow of the Messiah, who became the full manifestation of the Servant whom God appointed. Yeshua fulfilled Israel's call and became the means of their salvation. *Can a woman forget her nursing child?* The Lord made it clear that He would never forget His promises to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The failure of Israel was redeemed through Yeshua HaMashiach. Through Him a faithful remnant would be restored to their Land and finally to fellowship with God. This Chapter is understood through the context of the exile and the promises of God that are fulfilled in Yeshua. The Jews would not have understood this. They would have considered *themselves* as the Servant of God, which, apart from sin, they could have fulfilled completely. They were *a* servant of God but not *the* Servant. In hindsight, now that Yeshua has been revealed, we now know that these Prophecies pointed to Him. Israel was called as God's servant, to show the world the need of a Saviour. Yeshua is *the* Servant of God, the Saviour of the world. He alone fulfilled God's ultimate purposes for Israel, taking all the responsibility on Himself.

Chapter 50. The Prophecy concerning Yeshua continues. Israel's hope was in Him, even though the Prophetic words were not fully understood at the time. He would come and regather the nation. *Is My Hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?* asked God. See if you can understand how Yeshua fulfilled God's promise – the hope of Israel – as you read these verses. Verses 5 and 6 were fulfilled by the Romans who mocked Him prior to the Crucifixion.

Chapter 51. Line upon line was written to give hope to Israel. The Prophetic message increased in intensity. Difficult days for Israel and Judah lay ahead, because God needed to humble them on account of their sin and rebellion. Yet the message of hope was given to sustain them through their difficult years. God's promises to Abraham would not fail. These promises were given by the Creator of the Universe, who called Israel to be His Covenant people. These promises are for all

eternity and still stand today. God will move heaven and earth, if necessary, to fulfill His plans for His people.

Day 6

Chapter 52. Imagine the Bible without the Book of Isaiah. We may not have the privilege of Isaiah. God opened his spiritual eyes and allowed Him to see the Son of God, who had not yet come to earth in the form of a human being. Yet through the majestic words of the Prophet our spirits are quickened to experience the awesome majesty of God which Isaiah describes. The Bible would be incomplete without this revelation. We would, like Israel and Judah at the time of the exile, tend to look on human affairs with despair rather than hope. Isaiah is full of poetry. It is poetry written by God. The verses are more memorable than have been written by even the best human poets. They are also more powerful than poetry, because they are pure words from God Himself, full of truth. They show us our need, remind us of God's faithfulness and prepare us for the coming of Yeshua. Consider learning some of these Chapters by heart. After all, we commit some of the poems to heart written by mere mortals, so why not the Words of God Himself? They will then come to mind time and again, as strength and comfort. This is why they were first given to Israel and Judah. It has been a long hard journey for the Children of Israel, chosen as God's prophetic people, to show the world the need of Yeshua HaMashaich.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news. In previous Chapters, Isaiah declared God's judgment on Israel, on Judah and on all other nations, but always with a message of hope for the future. The faithful remnant will return to Zion with singing, just as the nation was delivered from Egypt at the time of Moses. Israel will be exalted once more, but the question is how? From their midst will come the Servant who will fulfill the call that God has put on this suffering nation. He alone will bear the burden of their sins. This good news will then be sent to the whole world, as God gathers a remnant of all nations to be redeemed, joining with the faithful remnant of Israel to make up one Covenant family of faith. Verses 13 to 15 are prophecies pointing to Yeshua on the Cross and the outpouring of His Spirit.

Chapter 53. Israel suffered for their sins and, through their suffering, the need of all people has been revealed. In this sense they have been a suffering servant of God. Only one Man has fulfilled Isaiah 53, however, suffering not for His own sins, but as the sin offering to bring atonement to all who have faith in Him. It seemed as though He was being punished when He suffered on the Cross, but it was not so. He was our sin offering. The Cross was the altar where He offered Himself to the Father, fulfilling all the types and shadows of the Levitical sacrificial system. Through His suffering all may be healed. Physical healing is possible where God gives faith for this, but the healing we need is more than this: it is the spiritual healing that God alone can give. When on earth, Yeshua ministered to the physically sick and healed many people. He also used physical healing as a sign of His power to forgive sins and restore relationship with God. He alone could do this: this is the good news that we must preach to all nations. Yeshua suffered for our sins and now, through faith, any person can be brought to living relationship with God. What was lost when God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, is restored through faith in

Yeshua. Isaiah 53 prophesied this and Yeshua fulfilled the Prophecy completely when He suffered on the Cross.

Chapter 54. Salvation through Yeshua's suffering is compared with the Flood at the time of Noah (Verse 9). Consider what this Flood taught us. The entire earth was submerged and all life was destroyed, except one family and a remnant of all animals. This was God's judgment on sin. This same sin still besets every human being, but God promised never to flood the world again. Instead, He brought salvation through His Son, a salvation as firm as His Covenant with Noah. This is the good news announced through Isaiah, news that can now be preached to the entire earth. *Enlarge the place of your tent*, says Isaiah to Judah, because people from all nations will come by faith to be joined to your nation.

Chapter 55. Here is the invitation to all people. The suffering of Yeshua for His people dealt with sin once and for all, so that all people might be restored to relationship with God. This is likened to drinking pure clean water and receiving food without charge. We cannot buy our salvation nor do anything to earn it, but we can trust in God, whose ways are not the same as our ways. Isaiah's Prophecy is hard to understand by people who try to gain favour with God through their own "good works". His favour cannot be bought because even our "good works" are insufficient and may not be rightly motivated. Yet, through faith, we can receive the free gift of salvation and have our hearts cleansed by the pure water of the Holy Spirit, so *seek the Lord while He may be found, call on Him while He is near*. These words of Isaiah were given to Judah for them to consider through the exile, so that they would be prepared for the coming of Messiah. Now, after a further 2000 years since Yeshua's sacrifice, this same invitation goes out to the entire earth. There is still time to seek Him and call upon Him for salvation.

Day 7

A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

Chapter 56. Here again is confirmation of the Prophetic Word: through Yeshua, the invitation to salvation through faith will be given to the entire world. In Verse 1, we read *My salvation is about to come*. The Hebrew for *My salvation* is *yeshuati* – My *yeshua*! Salvation was fully manifest in the Son of God, whom Mary and Joseph named *Yeshua*. Salvation is both a principle and a person. Veiled in Isaiah's Prophecy was the promise of Yeshua, the Son of God, through whom salvation would be accomplished. Before the coming of Yeshua, there were many who could not be a part of the community of God's people. Among them were eunuchs and those who had serious diseases making them blind, lame and leprous. Also the Gentiles were excluded from the Covenant. God was indicating that only those who were perfect could be in fellowship with Him. Ultimately, all of Israel and Judah were excluded and the Temple was destroyed, where sacrifices for sin were made. The exile showed that not only the lame, blind and crippled were excluded from fellowship with God, but all people. This prepared the way for Yeshua, through whom we can be perfected, cleansed of our sins and healed of our sinfulness. In this Chapter, Isaiah emphasised this wonderful truth once more.

This world has brought hard toil, especially for the Jews. Verse 5 uses the phrase *a place and a name*, as indicating the restored fortunes of Judah and of all people who were previously excluded from the Covenant people. This can also be translated *a memorial and a name*. The Hebrew is *Yad v'Shem*. The Hebrew word *yad* means *memorial* as well as *hand*. *Yad v'Shem* is the name given by the Jews in our day to the Holocaust memorial in Israel. Isaiah 56 Verse 5 is seen as being fulfilled through the restoration of Israel to the Land after the Second World War, following the horrific slaughter of 6 million Jews at the hands of the Nazis. Even this is not the full interpretation of what God promised through Isaiah. Restoration to the Land of Israel is a step towards full restoration to Him through Yeshua. Into the midst of a dark and wicked world, the Son of God came, in fulfillment of Prophecy, to restore from the separation of the Fall all who would come by faith. Consider this carefully today as you reflect on the majestic words of God through the Prophet Isaiah, and the certainty of His promises.
