

## Isaiah 40

### **Intro to Chs. 40-66** (2<sup>nd</sup> of 'two' Isaiahs under dual-authorship theories)

- vs. chs. 1-35's focus on the judgment thru which the people would go, a greater focus on Israel emerging on the other side of judgment
  - judgment as 1<sup>st</sup> half's Assyrian threat/attack vs. 2<sup>nd</sup> half's Babylonian victory/exile
  - looking forward to the end of Babylonian control– both Israel from exile and us in the end-times from Babylon's worldly power
- three sections of nine chapters each: GCM's chs. 40-48 on the purpose of peace; chs. 49-57 on the Prince of Peace; chs. 58-66 on the program of peace<sup>1</sup>
  - alternatively, deliverance from captivity in Babylon; rejection and restoration of the Suffering Servant; and the consummation of God's restoration of Israel and the world thru the Messiah
  - all developing ch. 35's closing theme– in the NIV, 'The Joy of the Redeemed'– now, more insistently calling Israel to cooperate with God's vision/plan
- > quite a bit on Christ in the 1<sup>st</sup> half but much more in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half; see also: 40:3's beginning (John the B preceding Christ) and 66:22-24's ending (Rev 19-22's heaven/hell)

### **40:1-2**

- 1's 'comfort' \*2– a key theme the rest of the way (13x in chs. 40-66)
  - for J: comfort finds its roots in judgment– the sum of the gospel message; MH's 'Words of conviction...must be followed with words of comfort.'
  - for S: comfort often finds its roots in adversity (irony; w/ app.); MH's 'It is the will of God that his people should be a comforted people, even in the worst of times.'
- both points hold for Israel– 40:1 follows chs. 1-35, but esp. 39:5-7!; see also: the inherent 'comfort' in 'my people' and 'your God'
  - Motyer's 'This is the way in which Isaiah solved the problem created by his own prophetic ministry...He must either follow chs. 38-39 with an apology for holding out hopes regarding Zion which have now been proven illusory, or else he must vindicate those hopes in the face of disaster by reiterating them in a way that takes account of the new situation.'

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<sup>1</sup> First two sections end the same way: 'There is no peace...for the wicked.'; the third ends with a brief description of Hell.

-> why 'comfort' \* 2?

-the bulk of the gospel message (see: 2<sup>nd</sup> C.'s 3-4 vs. 1000s); MH's 'the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an infinite value that it was more than double the demerits of sin'

-MH's 'not because the prophets are unwilling to do it (no, it is the most pleasant part of their work), but because sometimes the souls of God's people refuse to be comforted.' (w/ app.)

-> MH's 'We have here the commission and instructions given, not only to this prophet, but...to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people.'

-2a's 'speak tenderly to Jerusalem...' (Hos 2:14)

-2b's 'her hard service has been completed...her sin has been paid for...double (51:19, 61:7; offset by 1's double comfort!)...from the Lord's hand' – as becomes evident later, refers to the Babylonian exile (43:14)

-> all this addressed as plural (I Kings 22:19-22) to the three 'voices' who are to indicate/announce how this 'comfort' will come about...

-whose voices? – apparently unimportant; emphasis on message vs. messenger

#### **40:3-5's voice #1**

-3a's 'a voice of one calling in the desert...' – with 5b's bookend of the Lord speaking directly, surrounding a call to (and promise of) transformation

-3b's 'in the desert/wilderness' – 'prepare the way for the Lord, make straight...a highway for our God' (11:16, 26:7, 35:8, 57:14, 62:10)

-see also: 4's valleys raised; mountains lowered; rough ground becoming level

-a common practice in that time to send reps ahead of visiting monarchs

-desert/wilderness as a picture of rough times; and both easily revert back to original form; perhaps as pictures of omission/commission, legalism/compromise

-implies their P: called to prepare – remove obstacles and eagerly anticipate the King; i.e., to 'roll out the red carpet'

-w/ app. to us, MH's comparison of valleys to 'those that are hindered...by their dejections and despondencies', of mountains to 'those that are hindered...by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth', and of crooked/straight and rough/plain to 'those that...[are] disposed to thwart and contradict even that which is plain and easy because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations'

-> and with some participation on our part, points to God's P-- His faithfulness and ability to complete the task – Motyer's '[God] will arrive without fail, travel without difficulty, and be undelayed by hindrances.'

-> 5's 'the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all mankind together will see it...' - in Israel post-return from exile, and ultimately, in Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> coming (Jn 1:14, 11:4,40, 17:4, Heb 1:3a), 2<sup>nd</sup> coming (Mt 16:27, 24:30, 25:31), and His redeemed (I Cor 10:31, II Cor 3:18, Eph 3:21)

-> MH's 'may be applied to those prophets who were with the captives...*must* be applied to John the Baptist' - since all four gospels connect this to John *in* the desert/wilderness (Mt 3:1-3, Mk 1:1-4, Lk 1:16-17,76-77, 3:4-6, Jn 1:23)

-in both cases, the importance of repentance (Mt 3:2,6)- and along with voices 2&3, faith in God's word and the need to identify ourselves with a powerful but loving God

-when Israel was ready, Cyrus would allow them to return; when John the Baptist had preached repentance, Christ was revealed; when God and the world are ready, Christ will return in full glory

#### **40:6-8's voice #2**

-6a's commanded to 'cry out'- about 6b-8a's frailty of man and nature (Ps 37:1-2, 102:11-12, 103:15-17)- and their 'glory' (as with Assyria and Babylon)

-vs. 8b's 'but the word of our God stands forever' (55:10-11; Mt 24:35)

-frailty as a function of 7's 'breath of the Lord'- usually life-giving! (Ps 104:30)

-w/ app. to their problems, MH's 'The power of man, when it does appear *against* the deliverance, is not to be feared; for...it shall wither and be trodden down...The power of man, when it would appear *for* the deliverance, is not to be trusted to; for...[God] is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon.'

-w/ app. to us- our fears and false hopes

#### **40:9-11's voice #3<sup>2</sup>**

-9's cheering the good news in confidence

-9b's 'Here is your God' as return from exile (52:7), but full accomplishment in Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> coming, the preaching of the gospel to all nations, and His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming

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<sup>2</sup> Uses a feminine participle. If fig., perhaps alluding to Miriam (Ex 15).

-10's God 'comes with power' (62:11) vs. 11's God 'tends his flock like a shepherd' (Ps 23; Ps 80:1, Jer 31:10, Ez 34, Jn 10:11,14-15, Heb 13:20, I Pet 5:4)

-the two 'arms' (lit. 'arm'; 9x in Is 40-66) of God's justice and mercy (Mal 4:1-2):

10's arm 'rules' vs. 11's arm 'gathers the lambs...and carries them close to his heart'

-MH's 'The same that rules with the strong hand of a prince leads and feeds with the kind hand of a shepherd.'

-sovereign/shepherd motif as a David motif (II Sam 5:2, 7:7, Ez 34, Mic 5:4)

-> David as perfect shepherd; Christ's ministry; how do we do wrt these two arms?

-on 10's God's power, LAB's 'This reinforces the prophetic theme that the truly powerful nation is not the one with a strong military, but rather the one that relies on God's caring strength.'

-on 11's shepherd/sheep analogy, MH's 'He will gather them in when they wander, gather them up when they fall, gather them together when they are dispersed, and gather them home to himself at last; and all this with his own arm, out of which none shall be able to pluck them (Jn 10:27-29).'

-11b's emphasis on 'lambs' and 'those that have young'- children and parents: both groups that need special care (!) and speaks to God's attention in passing faith on to the next generation

#### **40:12-17**

-> the beginning of 12-26's answer<sup>3</sup> to 27's claim...

-12's poetry on the immensity of creation vs. God who can hold the waters in His hand (Job 38:8), can measure the heavens with His hand, and can put the earth's dust in a basket

-speaks to totality-- and His sovereignty, as well as the precision and ease of His workmanship

-13-14's poetry on how unfathomable the mind of God is<sup>4</sup> (quoted in Rom 11:34 & I Cor 2:16)

-but ironically, 13's question fits the Holy Spirit; see also: 13's 'counselor' (9:6) implies Holy Spirit's activity (Gen 1:2b)

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<sup>3</sup> Motyer divides the answer in two equivalent parts (40:12-20 vs. 21-26).

<sup>4</sup> Motyer notes that in Babylonian mythology, Marduk required input from Ea and had to overcome opposing forces in order to create the universe.

-15-17's nations (man-made power as focus of chs. 1-35) as 15's 'a drop in a bucket', etc. (!) by contrast<sup>5</sup>

-on 16's insufficient sacrifice, see: ch. 53's sufficient sacrifice

-on 17's 'worthless' as Gen 1:2a's 'formless', MH's 'When he pleases, he can as easily bring them all into nothing as at first he brought them out of nothing...Let this beget in us high thoughts of God and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our fear and our hope.'

#### **40:18-20**

-> 18a's 'To whom, then, will you compare God?'- vs. silliness of 18b-20's man-made idols<sup>6</sup> (a big topic in chs. 40-48, esp. 44:9-20!)

-19's idol for a rich man vs. 20's for a poor man

-as if the value of a god were a function of the materials from which it is made

-on the former as 'overlaid with gold', MH's 'It is a cheat; for it is gold on the outside, but within it is lead or copper, in this indeed representing the deities, that they are not what they seemed to be.'

-but in both cases, their willingness to expend available resources for the worship of their (false!) god

-20b's 'will not topple'- ironically, built not to move!; see: static/dead, engraved/cast idols vs. the dynamic/living God (2<sup>nd</sup> C.); Motyer's 'the crowning exposure of [its] uselessness- for all the discernment in making the right choice of wood and skill in making the best figure, the thing is designed for immobility!...there is nothing there except the materials'

#### **40:21-27**

-21's four rhetorical questions (bookending 'heard/told' with 'know/understand')-- asking if they somehow hadn't heard!

-22a's enthroned above the 'circle/horizon' (Pr 8:27) of the earth vs. people like grasshoppers (Num 13:33)

-22b's puts up the heavens as easily as (some) people can put up a tent (Ps 19:4, 104:2)

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<sup>5</sup> Motyer points to 'before him' rather than 'to him', implying that He loves us but we are nothing in comparison to Him.

<sup>6</sup> 'Idol' as Heb. 'pesel', referring to carved images vs. 'casts' as a molten image. Motyer's 'This mix of references covers idols of whatever sort.' On 19-20's 'intrusiveness', see: Motyer, p. 304, ftn # 3.

-23's sacks princes/rulers at will– by 24b's 'blow' (40:7), as if by a whirlwind with a plant  
-> 25's 'To whom will you compare me?' (40:18)– perhaps in response to their thinking that Babylon's gods were more powerful than God

-uses 'the Holy [set apart] One' (lit. 'Holy' as if another name for God) to end the discussion (of comparison)-- capping earlier description of God's power (12) in Creation, wisdom (13-14), greatness (15-17), sovereignty (21-23) and power in judgment (24)

-26's power displayed in creation<sup>7</sup> (revisited; Ps 96:5)

-as a reason to worship the Creator vs. His creation– the need to look beyond the effect to the Cause; MH's 'Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to them.'

-> all of the above vs. 27's complaint from Judah that God was ignoring them– during their captivity

-on 26b's naming each star, Motyer's 'the Creator God knows by name every item in his complex creation. How can he, who is the God of Israel, be accused of forgetting his people?'

-> must be some other answer to why you're (still) in exile!

-now, turning from God's majesty to His goodness...

#### **40:28-31**

-> 28's two of 21's four questions are repeated before again appealing to what they had seen and heard (relearning and understanding what they already 'knew'– w/ app.), and then concluding that God is...

-eternal and consistent/faithful (and thus, willing to save them)

-able to create (and thus, wise enough to save them)– revisiting 12-17

-would not 'grow tired or weary' (and thus, has the power and endurance to save them)

-but that His [specific] ways (including His seeming inactivity within their exile) are [often] beyond our understanding– given His eternity (vs. our temporal) and His Creation-wide view (vs. our local)

-> MH notes that Isaiah reproves them by reasoning with them– 'Many of our foolish frets and foolish fears would vanish before a strict enquiry into the causes of them.'

-> Motyer notes that Isaiah's answer starts with a theological reminder-- 'The wrong inference from God's transcendence is that he is too great to care; the right

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<sup>7</sup> 25-26 bookends w/ 12 and reiterates 18-20. 'Lift up' used to depict astral worship in Dt 4:19– a problem for Israel (II Kings 17:16, 21:3) and a dominant religious practice in Babylon.

one is that he is too great to fail.'– and then turns to experience: 'Together, and in this order, they constitute the biblical way of renewal.'

-> 29-31's in sum, Motyer's 'Life shows that merely natural resources fail, but a different experience is possible.'– for those who depend on God in J&S (w/ app.)

-29's 'He gives strength to the weary...'

-vs. 30's 'youths...young men' who 'grow tired and weary...stumble and fall'

-youth as those in peak physical condition– but perhaps least likely to fully exert themselves and most likely to depend solely on themselves

-> 31a's 'those who hope [hold a confident expectation] in the Lord will...'

-31b's 'renew their strength'

-Heb. term as lit. 'exchange'– strength for Strength, as from natural to supernatural, becoming god-like thru transformation (II Cor 3:18); term also used for a change of clothes (Gen 35:2, Jud 14:12; Rom 13:14, Eph 4:22-24, Col 3:10)

-31c's 'soar on wings like eagles'– traditionally, the greatest of birds

-31d's 'run and not grow weary...walk and not be faint'

→ as three different states/speeds...

## *Isaiah 41-42*

-review/overview of chs. 40-41: three voices commanded to preach comfort (40:1-11) and three pictures of consolation (41:8-20) surrounding God as Creator and Sovereign over history (40:12-41:7)

### **41:1-7**

-1's 'come forward and speak...at the place of judgment' (1:18a's 'come let us reason together')– Isaiah's frequent use of a courtroom motif in this section, with God as judge and prosecutor

-MH's 'The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial.'

-1's 'islands' (14 of 15x in OT are in Isaiah) and 'nations'– the totality of the Gentile world

-1's 'strength' and 'speak'– introduces 21-24's two areas for comparison: power and wisdom

-1's 'renew their strength' (vs. 40:31a's offer!)

-let the comparisons begin, whether thru power or reason

-or God making an equivalent offer to the Gentiles; Motyer's 'It is at the heart of Isaiah's message that the Gentiles are to be fellow-heirs w/ Israel.'

-2-4's God acting thru 2a's 'one from the east'

-no names mentioned here; emphasis on principles over circumstances (chs. 28-29)

-in trying to name names, can refer to Babylon or 44:28's Cyrus who would conquer Babylon in 539– or Abraham over the kings in Gen 14 (given 41:8b's reference) or Joshua's conquest of Canaan

-2a's 'in righteousness to his service' (as 42:6's Christ)

-God's righteousness, not necessarily the servant's (as Assyria-- 10:5)!

-ironically, few on the losing side of such 'service' would ever attribute it to God-- but in any case, God is sovereign over history

-2b's God 'hands nations over to him' to be reduced to 'dust/chaff'

-4's 'calling forth the generations from the beginning'– Creation or Abraham

(41:8b; see: Abram delivered by God from Babylon and its idolatry– Josh 24:2-3a)

-5a's fear, but dealt with thru 5b-6's alliances and 7's idolatry (incl. 'so it will not topple'– 40:20b)

-Motyer's 'they turn to each other and then together to idols' and idols as 'the product of human skill and human fear'– 'the pitiable plight of the world'

-idols unable to help vs. 40:12-26's Lord of Creation and here, the Lord of history

-Gentiles invited to relationship with God (41:1), but fail to respond...

-> Isaiah's use of various 'servants' in this section<sup>8</sup> (see also: the four so-called 'Servant Songs' in chs. 40-55)

-if not Cyrus in 41:2, then clearly identified later (45:4, 48:1)

-most often, Israel- in reality or idealized (41:8-13, 42:19, 43:10, 44:1,2,21, 45:4, 48:20)

-later fulfilled in Jesus (42:1-7, 49:3-7, 50:10, 52:13, 53:11; see: ch. 14's satanic servant vs. ch. 53's obedient servant; Mt 12:18-21, Acts 8:35, Phil 2:7)

-and to be exemplified by Christians (Acts 13:47- as Mt 5:14's light from Is 42:6, Jn 8:12, 9:5's Light)

-> 8-20's three pictures of consolation (all somewhat connected to 40:28-31)...

-not just about idolatry and reaching the Gentiles, but about ministering to Israel

**41:8-13's** picture #1: *this* servant victorious in the face of hostility

-8a's 'but you...'

-8,9's 'servant' (vs. 41:2's 'service')- Israel

-8,9's 'chosen' (12x in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Isaiah; Dt 7:6, 9:4-6, I Jn 4:19), 9's 'not rejected', 9's 'called' by God (Abraham from Ur; Israel from Egypt)

-connected to 8b's their ancestor Abraham (Gen 17:7, Gen 18:19) 'my friend' (II Chron 20:7, Jas 2:23; Jn 15:15) and 9's God bringing the remnant back from exile

-> 10a,13b's 'so do not fear(14a)...[or] be dismayed...do not be afraid' (former as the most frequent command in Scripture)

-10b's 'for I am with you', 'for I am your God', and 'I will strengthen/help(14b)/uphold you'

-Motyer's 'divine presence...divine personal commitment...[and] the promise of divine aid'

-10b's God's right hand will 'uphold' them vs. 13's 'hold' their right hand!

-11-12's enemies will be disgraced and destroyed- Motyer's 'the centerpiece of this section...It is a foolhardy thing to meddle with the servant of such a Master!'

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<sup>8</sup> LaSor et. al. (p. 393): 'The attempt of Bible editors to put some passages in quotation marks may help to point out this characteristic [Ch. 51 reads at times like the preaching of the prophet, yet at others it seems that God himself is speaking to the people], but the lack of agreement about where quotations begin and end permits no great confidence in the results.'

### **41:14-16's picture #2: weakness transformed into strength**

-14a's 'worm Jacob, little Israel' (Job 25:6, Ps 22:6)

-MH's 'God's people are sometimes as worms, in their humble thoughts of themselves and their enemies' haughty thoughts of them- worms, but not vipers, as their enemies are...'

-> 15's God would make them a powerful instrument (Jer 51:2, Mic 4:13, Rom 6:13); they'd crush their powerful/proud enemies; but 16a's be aided by a divine/powerful wind (usually a gentle wind for wheat vs. chaff), and then 16b's rejoice in the Lord

-God's transformation- and then their P, but still God's P- and then worship

-14's powerless/toothless snake (a la Gen 3!) vs. 15's 'teeth'

-> comparisons: 14a's Israel as 'worm' vs. 14b's 'the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel'- then 15's sledge vs. 16's all-powerful wind: sledge is more impressive and useful, but still nothing next to the wind

-> Motyer's 'Whatever barriers may confront the Lord's people, they are not to be measured in proportion to the people's inherent weakness, but in proportion to the Lord's promise to transform.'

### **41:17-20's picture #3: poor travelers receiving miraculous provision**

-17a's 'poor and needy' (fig. for Israel or the faithful remnant) as thirsty, but 17b's God will answer them- 18-19's renewal of the land, incl. water and trees in the desert/wasteland (35:1-2,6-7, 43:19-20, 44:3-4)

-seven types of trees mentioned-- all of which grow in Palestine (vs. Babylon; deuterio-Isaiah?!), all of which provide shelter vs. fruit, most of which typically grow in fertile areas and would not be found in combo with each other

-Egypt/Exodus motif (Ex 15:22-27, 17:1-7)-- to be fulfilled in eschatology, but also the daily experience of our pilgrimage (Ps 84:5-7)

-> 20's 'so that people (lit. 'they'- 17's 'poor and needy') may see and know...that the hand of the Lord has done this'

### **41:21-29**

-21's 'present your case...' (41:1 court proceedings cont'd, given 41:7's turn to idolatry)

-MH's 'There needs no more to show the absurdity of sin than to produce the reasons that are given in defense of it...'

-Motyer's 'It is insufficient for Yahweh merely to make a claim to direct world history...It is therefore essential to offer some proof. Isaiah proposes a test case: to predict an event and then fulfill the prediction would demonstrate control of [history].' (see: science!)

-22-23a's predict the future based on understanding/explaining the past or outright ability to predict vs. 23b's 'do something'– take action to elicit fear, either good for one's friends or bad against one's enemies

-back to 1's speak & strength-- from predicting to controlling events;  
knowledge/ignorance to power/impotence

-NIV omits 24a's 'see...' (see: 29's parallel)– addressed to idolaters and ripping idols

-24a's idolaters are 'worthless' because of their professed faith (Ps 115:2-8, Jer 2:5, Hos 9:10)

-24b's who 'chooses' whom? in any case, esp. ironic vs. 8,9's 'chosen'

-> no answer given in defense to 22-23's charges; so, time for the verdict: idols and idolaters are nothing (40:17-18, 44:9)

-if so, then worthy of worship, but if not...; and by inference, since God has these, He should be feared and worshiped (see: I Kings 18)

-25's God has 'stirred up one from the north (standard military approach via the Fertile Crescent) and the east (geographical location; 41:2) who will crush people– the power to move people

-fits Assyria and Babylon, but soon to be revealed as Cyrus (44:28)

-'who calls on my name'– Cyrus as a believer, or alt. trans. allow God's name being honored by Cyrus' choices<sup>9</sup>

-26-27's God's unique foreknowledge of historical events

-if written by a later author-- and God is unable to predict future events thru His prophets-- then this ridiculously undermines his argument! (42:9)

-conclusion: 28-29's idols are worthless (revisited)

-> Gentiles have no apparent way to see God; if God is sovereign, does He care about the Gentiles– and if so, what's the plan?! (eventually 42:6)...

#### **42:1-4**

-1's 'Here is...' as lit. 'look/see' as 41:24,29 (although not in the NIV!)

-> the first of the four 'servant songs' (42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12<sup>10</sup>)

-1a's 'servant'<sup>11</sup> (41:8,9)

-1b's 'my chosen one in whom I delight' (Mt 3:17, 17:5 w/ app. to Christ \* 2)

-1c's God 'will put [His] Spirit on him' (11:2, 61:1)

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<sup>9</sup> See: Motyer, p. 317.

<sup>10</sup> The last 'servant song' also begins with 'look/see'.

<sup>11</sup> See: Motyer, p. 319, fn. # 1 on the many uses of 'servant'.

-> who is this? perhaps an idealized Israel or Cyrus– but certainly Christ (quoted in Mt 12:17-21)

-key theme: 3\* justice– 1d's 'he will bring justice to the nations' (its universality); 3b-4a's faithful to 'bring forth justice' and powerful/persistent (despite apparent difficulties) until 'he establishes justice on earth'

-style issues: 2's will not shout; 3a's gentleness– 'bruised reed...smoldering wick'<sup>12</sup>

-Motyer's 'a quiet, unaggressive, unthreatening ministry. To this servant, nothing is useless, even the bruised reed...Neither is anything (e.g., a smoldering wick) too far gone toward extinction.' (Ps 72:1-4; w/ app.)

-vs. ch. 41's servant!

-patience within discipline/judgment—the coexistence of wrath and mercy; MH's 'Those that are wicked he will be patient with; when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised weeds, he will give them space to repent and not immediately break them.'

-Garret Keizer: "...the Consuming Fire Who Is God allows us our own fire, however much it fumes and stinks at times."

-> 4b's response: 'put their hope...in his law'

- 'islands' (41:1) as some/few of the Gentiles responding (vs. 'nations')

-> each Servant Song followed by Motyer's 'confirmatory comment'; from 1-4's speaking of the servant to 5-9's speaking to the servant...

## **42:5-9**

-bookending: 5's God as Creator and giver of life/breath (revisiting 40:12-26's argument) and 9's past prophecies fulfilled; others being announced (revisiting 41:1-7,21-29's case)

-Motyer's 'Thus the two aspects of the Lord's glory which earlier exposed the plight of the Gentile world now bracket a passage declaring Gentile hope.'

-on 5's God as Creator– 40:12-26's doctrine now applied to the world (vs. Israel)– begs the Q: if God is the giver/sustainer of life, what is His plan for the Gentiles?

-6b's would take hold of their hand, keep them and make them 'a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles'

- 'covenant' alludes to New Covenant (Heb 8:6-13, 9:15)

- 'a light for the Gentiles' (9:1-2, 42:16, 49:6; w/ app. to us– Mt 5:14-16, Lk 1:79, II Cor 4:6; w/ app. to Christ– Jn 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, Acts 26:18, Col 1:13)

-7's to give sight to the blind, to free captives from prison and dungeons

-vs. 8's God will not share His glory with idols

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<sup>12</sup> Motyer notes that his ministry is defined in solely negative terms: quoting North: this 'introduces us to one whose task is without precedent and can, therefore, only be described in negative terms.'

-6a's called in righteousness (like 41:2's conqueror!), but...

-former drives the nations to alliances/idolatry (41:5-7); latter brings them to God

### **42:10-17**

-10a's 'Sing to the Lord a new song'– 10b-12's from all over the (Gentile) world, based on 42:6-9...

-Motyer's 'a new song responds to a fresh realization or a fresh display of the goodness of God...a call for world praise in response to the world-wide work of the servant.'; LAB's 'Majestic works prompt majestic responses.'

-ch. 41's conqueror provoked fear; ch. 42's servant provokes song

-on 10b's 'islands' (41:1, 42:4) and 11a's 'desert', MH's 'The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a [desert], uncultivated and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the [desert] shall praise God.'

-13's God as warrior– leading to 15's destruction (vs. 41:18-19)

-14a's 'for a long time I kept silent...quiet and held myself back' (63:15, 64:12; Gen 43:31, 45:1) vs. 14b's 'now, I cry out, gasp and pant'– 'like a woman in childbirth'

-picture of new life, or even, Christ

-eager, but having to wait until the proper time for 9's 'new things'

-16's 'lead the blind...turn darkness into light...will not forsake them' (matching 42:7; vs. 42:18's blind Israel)

-as 14's new child (if Israel)

-vs. 17's 'those who trust in idols...will be turned back in utter shame'– failing to respond to 42:6,16's light

### **42:18-25's but Israel won't be much help (until then)...**

-subject: 19's 'the servant of the Lord'– turns out to be 24's Israel (41:8)

-critique: 18-20's blind and deaf (Jn 9:39-41)

-Motyer's 'It is one thing to have faculties...but it is another thing to use them.'

-mostly to answer the future/anticipated question of those in exile: where is God?? being punished for spiritual deafness/blindness...

-how would they respond? or how could they respond if they were deaf/blind?!; MH's 'like the command given to the man that had the withered hand to stretch it forth; though he could not do this, because it was withered, yet, if he had not attempted to do it, he would not have been healed.'

-more broadly, wrestling with the question of how God intends to save Gentiles when Israel has the same sin problem-- but worse yet, beyond 'blindness'

(42:6,7,16; Rom 1:20), is also 'deaf' (since it had heard the message)! -> 42:1-7

- 21's 'it pleased the Lord...to make his law great' (same as 53:10)
  - incl. God's intent that Israel- its land and its people-- would be a great witness for Him and His name, fulfilling 42:1-7's call (2:2-4; Dt 4:5-8; see: early Solomon)
  - intended prosperity, glory, etc. vs. 22's His people have become 'plunder'<sup>13</sup> - given their disobedience (Dt 28:49-51)
- 23's who will listen this time?; turns out: many hear, but some/few listen
- 24's God handed Israel over as 'loot' since they had been disobedient; 25's God's wrath, but they still didn't understand

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<sup>13</sup> See: Motyer, p. 329 on how this dates Isaiah prophetically vs. historically.

### *Isaiah 43:1-44:23*

-> in this section (42:18-44:23), moving from principles to history (names Babylon and specifies exile vs. 40:2's 'hard service') and continuing to address both national (42:18-43:21) and spiritual (43:22-44:23) restoration; context: servants, Israel's failure, trying to reach the Gentiles...

#### **43:1-7**

-1a's 'but now...' (as 'now then...')- not temporal, but a surprising conclusion to the matter: mercy vs. expected destruction, love vs. deserved wrath (Rom 5:20, Jas 2:13b)

-1b's 'fear not, for I have redeemed you'; 5a's 'do not be afraid' (41:10)

-> in spiritual captivity (42:18-25), but God would send a Servant; thus, they should not fear (43:1-7), God would be revealed thru them (43:8-13), and they would be restored from Babylon (43:14-28)

-2's 'When you pass thru the waters...they will not sweep over you. When you walk thru the fire, you will not be burned'<sup>14</sup> (vs. 42:25)

-fig., water and fire as totality, perhaps representing baptism and sanctification

-lit., for Israel, an allusion to the Red Sea & Jordan River in the past- and Dan 3 in the future

-interesting that Babylonian exile was a piece of cake vs. Egypt- shorter and far more pleasant (Jer 29)

-for us, a bridge thru vs. over troubled waters (I Cor 10:13)

-in all cases, Motyer's 'a divine "thus far and no further"' (Job 1:12, 2:6), waters without drowning, fire without burning up'

-3a's 'savior'- broad definition and Isaiah as 'the Lord saves' (revisited)

-with 3b's Egypt/Cush/Seba<sup>15</sup> as ransom, 4b's men/people 'in exchange' for them

-speaks to deliverance from Egypt in the past; all three conquered by Persia- a reward of sorts? (41:2; Ez 29:19-20)

-on former, consider the extent of the devastation to free Israel from bondage (w/ app. to us and the even higher price paid in Christ)

-5b-7's God would gather His faithful remnant from all over- then (prophetic, given Palestinian orientation) and for Heaven

-> why?

-1a's God as 'he who created/formed you'; 7b's His faithful as those 'whom I create/formed/made...for my glory'- God's workmanship (Eph 2:10)

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<sup>14</sup> Prophetic on going into exile (vs. historic on leaving exile), see: Motyer, p. 331.

<sup>15</sup> Seba's location is unknown- probably south of Egypt or (near) Sheba in south Arabia.

- 3a's 'For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior'
- 4a's 'Since you are precious and honored in my sight and because I love you' (Ex 19:5)

### **43:8-13's** courtroom proceedings on what God promised/fulfilled– vs. idols (as ch. 41)

- call for witnesses: 8's another chance for Israel, but blind and deaf
  - Motyer's 'relying on such testimony, [God] is bound to lose the case, for what court accepts the testimony of the blind to what they have seen or of the deaf to what they have heard?...[God must], in fact, bear his own testimony in default of theirs.'
  - Israel fails to live up to its calling and God must argue His own case without as much as evidence as would be ideal
- evidence: 9's 'former things', referring to 3's exodus/deliverance
- in any case, the outcome of trial:
  - wrt the idolaters, MH's 'They cannot so much as inspire a historian, much less a prophet.'
  - again, like I Kings 18; MH's 'If [the idolaters] do prove them, they shall be justified...If they do not prove them, let them own the true God...The cause of God is not afraid to stand a fair trial; but it may reasonably be expected that those who cannot justify themselves in their irreligion should submit to the power of truth and true religion.'
  - God wins the verdict on the basis of 13a's His identity and 13b's His works
- punchlines: 10b's 'before me no gods was formed' (God's self-existence a la Ex 3:14); 11's 'apart from me there is no savior' (9x in chs. 43-46; I Tim 4:10); 13b's 'no one can deliver out of my hand' (Dt 32:17,39)

### **43:14-21**

- 14-15's God would overthrow and punish Babylon (1<sup>st</sup> explicit mention since ch. 39) with its own exile, incl. its ships for commerce (Jer 50:38, 51:13,36, Rev 18:15-18)
  - 14,15's passing reference to 'Holy' may be meant to keep spiritual (as well as national) concerns in mind (developed in 43:22ff...)
- 16-17's reference to the Exodus and the Red Sea (51:10)
  - 17b's 'wick' (vs. 42:3)
  - add uncertainty vs. status quo in Babylon– and Motyer's 'But since the overthrow of one conqueror could merely spell the advent of another...it is explained that the fall of Babylon is an Egypt-exodus event, followed by a homeward journey full of divine provision.'
- > from 14-17's His sovereignty over people/nations and ability to sack to 18-21's His control of Creation and ability to transform

-18-19a's 'forget the former things...I am doing a new thing!'(42:9)– deliverance from Babylon patterned after the Exodus, but even better, and eventually Christ

-19b's 'Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?'

-19c-21's 'a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland'-- honored by animals and praised by His people

-the (direct) path to Israel from Egypt and Babylon was thru the desert; and indicative of God's ability to produce water, even in the desert

-see also: Ex 17's water from the rock in the desert; MH's 'Though we do not find that the miracle was repeated in their return out of Babylon, yet the mercy was.'

-> 21b's goal (praise) allows segue from national restoration to 43:22ff's spiritual restoration...

### **43:22-24**

-22's 'Yet you have not called upon me...you have not *wearied* yourselves for me'

-former alludes to personal relationship

-23a's no (honoring) sacrifices offered by them vs. 23b's no (burdensome) sacrifices demanded by Him

-24a's no sacrifices offered vs. 24b's burdened (vs. 23b!)/*wearied* God with their sins! (Ps 95:10, Mal 2:17, Acts 15:10)

-> if lit., sins of omission and commission

-> prob. fig.; Motyer's 'Isaiah challenges the people at a point where they may well have thought themselves to be above reproach: the [practice] of religion...At first sight, the accusation seems rather that of failure to [practice their religion] at all...This understanding of the verses, however, cannot be correct for there is no known people of Israel's history to which it would apply. The pre-exilic complaint was of inordinate [religious] activity (1:10-17; Jer 7:21-23, Amos 4:4-5, 5:21-24, Mic 6:7-8).'<sup>16</sup>

-> instead, that their religious observances were useless and even offensive in the face of ritual practice and moral disobedience

-Motyer's 'By making ritual the exclusive content of religion, they had actually excluded themselves from the benefits the sacrifices were intended to bring. Ritual divorced from moral and spiritual commitment neither satisfies God nor blesses his people...There was much religious fervor, but no religious reality. At the point where they might have expected to please God, they wearied him; where they most zealously assumed themselves to

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<sup>16</sup> Motyer notes further that airing this complaint during exile would be inappropriate with the priesthood and sacrificial system disabled– and as soon as they returned to Jerusalem, they avidly returned to their religious practices (Ezra 3 and Hag 2:10-14, but Mal 1:7-8).

be right, they were proving only that they were still in their sin.’  
-> 23,24’s ‘burdened’ as Egyptian slavery/bondage– perhaps a word-play where Isaiah indicates that they were meant to be liberated, but had put themselves under yokes of slavery again of their own making– legalism and license (Gal 5:1,13)

**43:25-28**’s courtroom action revisited (41:1-7,21-29, 43:8-13)

-> from 24’s horrible blots on their record to 25’s ‘I am he who blots out your transgression...and remembers you sins no more’ (Ps 51:1-2)

-w/ app.; MH’s ‘As if the great God would teach us that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy and to keep ourselves from being wearied with them.’

-26’s plea to reason their case– here, Israel (vs. 41:21-29’s case against the nations)

-but overwhelming evidence: 27’s their ‘first father’ (51:2’s Abraham; also, Adam or Moses?) and ‘spokesmen’ (prophets and esp. priests) had ‘sinned/rebelled’

-> obvious sentence after finding them guilty: 28’s disgrace, destruction and scorn<sup>17</sup>– divine wrath/curse vs. 25’s divine pardon

-the tension of God’s wrath/mercy– and the inability to convey that, except thru chronological writing (see: Hosea)

**44:1-5**

-1a’s ‘but now...’ (43:1)– again, a ‘surprising’ response: no explanation, just grace<sup>18</sup>

-but requires 26’s confronting their own sin and helplessness before the law and 1’s listen (vs. 42:18-20’s deafness)– pre-reqs to repentance and accepting the Gospel

-1-2’s Israel: 1,2’s His ‘chosen’ (41:8,9, 42:1), 2’s His creatures– ‘made/formed’ by God (43:7), will be helped by God and is not to be afraid, 2b’s Jacob and Jeshurun<sup>19</sup>, and ‘my servant’ (41:8)

-repeating many of the previous descriptors– as if to encourage them about His faithfulness and their continued position in His economy

-3’s God: 3a’s ‘I will pour out water on the thirsty land’; 3b’s ‘I will pour out my Spirit on

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<sup>17</sup> Jacob (representing non-C) to be destroyed vs. Israel (representing C’s) to be scorned (more moderate).

<sup>18</sup> Motyer notes that this is enhanced by the structure of a missing middle– which should provide the climactic explanation.

<sup>19</sup> Motyer speculates that there may be intentional tension choosing Jacob (‘deceiver’) and Jeshurun (‘upright’; Dt 32:15, 33:5,26)– one looking back realistically; the other looking forward hopefully. See: 43:28’s punishment of Jacob vs. Israel.

your offspring' (32:15; Lk 11:13, Jn 7:38-39, Gal 3:16's 'seed')

-> resulting in 4-5's for Israel: 4's growth and (spiritual) prosperity, incl. 5's allegiance to God and new name implying new state

-> bookending: 5's predicted response to grace vs. 43:26's implied silence in the face of the charges; 3-4's blessing of the descendants (incl. 3's 'I will pour...') vs. 43:27-28's sins of the fathers (incl. 28's 'I will disgrace')- all surrounding the unchanging position of God's unfaithful people and the unchanging provisions/promises of a faithful God

#### **44:6-8**

-6b's 'I am the first and the last' (48:12; Rev 1:17, 2:8, 22:13)

-6c,8c's 'no other God/Rock' (43:11, 46:9; 17:10, 26:4, 30:29; Dt 32:4,31, I Cor 8:5-6)

-> on the combo, MH's 'He is infinite, and therefore there can be no other; he is all-sufficient, and therefore there needs no other.'

-> based on God's 8b's 'proclaim and foretell' (41:22-26) vs. 7a's invitation for idols to claim otherwise

-requires 7b's explanation of things past and predictions of things to come-- the challenge/conditions that would have to be met to claim comparability

-> 8a's 'do not be afraid' (revisited)- given the character of God

-in combo with the above, MH's 'They needed not to hope in any other god...They needed not to fear any another god.'

-> chs. 40-41 exposes the folly of idolatry in light of the character of God; chs. 43-44 magnifies God's glory by revealing the absurdity of idolatry...

#### **44:9-20**

-Richards' 'The OT's most scathing denunciation of the foolishness of idolatry', but Motyer's 'It is a penetrating analysis of the human need for the divine and an exposure of every man-made device to make life secure...The satire is in the facts not in the tone.'

-> seems odd today, but remember Rachel and Micah; and w/ app. for us later

-9's idolaters as 'nothing', 'blind/ignorant'; 9's 'the things they treasure are worthless'

-there would be no god unless the human made him; the flip side of monotheism- all other gods are man-made

-MH's 'Who but a madman, or one out of his wits, would think of forming a god, of making that which, if he make it a god, he must suppose to be his maker?'

-9's 'speak up for' and 11's 'take their stand for'- will result in being 'brought down to terror and infamy'

-9's 'to their own shame' vs. 11a's 'will be put to shame'- their P and God's P in their shaming

-10-13's craftsmen:

- 10a's lit. 'whoever has shaped a god *has* cast an idol'; Motyer's 'His intention is to achieve the divine; his accomplishment is the material!'
- 10b's doing something that 'profits him nothing' (same as 9's 'worthless')
- 12's blacksmith incl. effort/strength to the point of exhaustion (vs. 40:28-29)
  - Motyer's 'the product of human strength, indeed diminishing strength in regular need of outside sustenance'
- 13's carpenter, incl. precision of the process (ironically, defining the parameters of a god)-- but 'in the form of man' (Gen 1:27 vs. Dt 4:16)
  - MH's 'The form in which it was made is that of a man, a poor, weak, dying creature; but it is the noblest form and figure that he is acquainted with, and being his own, he has a peculiar fondness for it.'
  - and not even as good as a man!; see: Pinocchio, Frankenstein
  - MH's 'God put a great honor upon man...when he made him after the image of God; but man does a great dishonor to God when he makes him...after the image of man' (or God made us in His image and we like to return the favor; Rom 1:21-23)
- 14-17's material:
  - 14's trees
    - list implies 'pick a tree, any tree'; so many options– unique? supernatural?
    - valuable but ironically, planted by man, and created & nurtured by God
    - from 'cut down' to 'planted'– from its ending to its beginning; impressive at the end but fragile and dependent in its origins (godlike?!)
  - 15-17's double duty for the wood– some for burning/cooking; 'the rest' (44:19's 'what is left'; left-overs!) for making an idol, thinking it can 'save me' and calling it 'my god' (45:20)
    - Motyer's 'the worship of what, had chance been different, would have been used to cook lunch'
      - MH's 'no innate virtue...as capable of being burnt as any other tree...[and] he makes no difficulty of throwing part of into the fire as common rubbish'
    - overextending that which has value from ably meeting legitimate human needs to being unable to fulfill an illegitimate divine ministry
      - ironically, by making the valuable divine, renders it useless
  - > the material cannot become spiritual or meet spiritual needs...
- 18-20's stupidity of all this, incl.
  - 18's ignorant, blind, closed-minded (6:9-10; Ps 82:5, Acts 17:30, II Cor 4:4)
  - 19's 'no one stops to think...' (w/ app.)
  - 20's 'he feeds on ashes' (Ps 102:9), 'a deluded heart misleads him', cannot save himself or see that 'this thing' in his hand is 'a lie' (Hab 2:18, Rom 1:25, II Thess

2:11)

-former as either a proverb for doing something silly or looks back to 44:15a,16a's fire; see also: MH's 'evidence of a depraved appetite'

-> 8's rock vs. 9-20's wood

-> idols have no power to inform or change the heart; Motyer's 'The idolater is busy making his idol and in the end is left unchanged...What the idolater actually does is astonishing enough, but that he fails to see it as such is doubly astonishing...Dead though it is, it has this dread capacity...The idolater holds his idol, the product of his own strength, but the reality is that the idol now holds him and he cannot break free from the bondage of the lie.'

-w/ app. to us with the devil, sin nature, the world- and giving power to them

-> w/ app., Motyer's 'In our generation, we would nominate different craftsmen from those of vs. 12-13 and different constructs from those in vs. 14-17, but the absurdity of devotion to the man-made remains.'

-> all this to keep Israel from the temptation to idolatry- in general, and esp. while in Babylon's culture

-see: MH's answer to the taunt, 'Where is your God?': 'What are your gods?'

-to encourage them within exile; MH's 'that God would certainly appear against those who set up such scandalous competitors as these'

#### **44:21-23**

-21a's 'remember...'

-21b's Israel as 'my servant' \* 2 (revisited)

-22a's God had 'swept away [their] offenses/sins like a cloud/the morning mist'

-22b's poignant call to 'return to me', given His (past) redemption of them

-23's rejoicing (Ps 96:10-13, 98:7-9, Lk 15:7, Rev 18:20)

-> 9,10,20's idolater made idol vs. 21's God made Israel; 18-20's in bondage to idol vs. 21's servant to God; 17's 'save me' vs. 22,23's 'redeemed'; 14's trees for idols reduced to 19's block of wood vs. 23's trees praising God

-> to close: MH's 'Our sins are as a cloud, a thick cloud; they interpose between heaven and earth, and for a time...separate between us and God (59:2); they threaten a storm, a deluge of wrath, as thick clouds do, which God will rain upon sinners (Ps 11:6a!). [But] when God pardons sin, he blots out this cloud, this thick cloud, so that the intercourse with heaven is laid open again. God looks down upon the soul with favor; the soul looks up to him with pleasure. The cloud is scattered by the influence of the Sun of Righteousness.'

## *Isaiah 44:24-48:22*

### **Intro/Review**

-Motyer's 'Isaiah has diagnosed a double need in the Lord's people, national bondage (42:18-43:21) and spiritual sinfulness (43:22-44:23). He now turns to say how those needs will be met.' -> chs. 45-48's national bondage thru His servant, Cyrus- chs. 49-53's spiritual bondage thru the Superior Servant, Christ

### **44:24-28**

-24's Lord of salvation and creation

-25-26a's Lord over others' false prophecy<sup>20</sup> and wisdom (I Cor 3:19)- and His prophets' true prophecy

-26b-27's Lord of sovereignty and power- in re-establishing Judah and Jerusalem in drying up the 'watery deep' (refs to Exodus and Cyrus draining the Euphrates)

-28's Lord of history- here, in using Cyrus as His 'shepherd' to 'accomplish all I please', including rebuilding Jerusalem and its temple

-MH's 'It is the greatest honor of the greatest men to be employed for God as instruments of his favor to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd than to be emperor of Persia.'

-naming Cyrus 150 years before his reign and 200 years before his decree (in 538)

-Motyer's 'Such a detailed prediction has, of course, excited adverse comment and is taken to be a ground for insisting that these prophecies must be dated after Cyrus began his victorious rise.'- but note I Kings 13:2 (and II Kings 23:15-17), and Isaiah's use of fulfilled prophecy to argue for God's uniqueness vs. idols

-> all of this to expect trouble given prophecy; to repent given God's sovereignty and good promises; to persevere thru the trial, understanding its limits in hope

-see: Motyer's 'To us, aided by hindsight, it is obvious that Cyrus was a good thing in that he set the captive people free. The captives, however, seeing an even greater conqueror approach, would tend to fear an even stronger bondage.' (see also: relatively nice- and worldly-- captivity in Babylon)

-see also: limits of prophecy/signs to inspire faith- in general and here- bolstering existing faith vs. rationalizations, lack of clarity (e.g., Cyrus IV), timing (esp. when can't imagine Babylon being sacked so suddenly)

-> bottom line: trust or not...

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<sup>20</sup> See: Motyer, p. 354 on Babylonian literature's failure to prophesy such.

## 45:1-8

-see: 8's prayer, closing off this section– that righteousness and salvation<sup>21</sup> would pour like rain and from springs (Hos 10:12); Motyer's 'heavenly showers which will produce fruits of blessing on earth'

-> 1a's Cyrus as God's 'anointed', led by God to 'subdue nations' & defeat kings (Dan 5)

-on 'anointed' (see: 10:5-15)...

-only Gentile to receive this title (as I Sam 10:1's Saul and 16:6's David)– and appropriate given that he did more than most of Israel's own kings!

-related to Heb. term for Messiah<sup>22</sup> ('masiah'-- lit. 'the anointed one'); can imply a fig. Messiah, esp. wrt kings; fulfilled lit. in Christ (Ps 2:2, Dan 9:25-26, Mt 1:17)

-like Christ, Cyrus would deliver God's people & judge His enemies

-1b-2's helped by God: opening doors, leveling mountains, cutting down [city] gates

-3a's rewarded with treasure (see: conquered Babylon)– later donated to help Israel rebuild (Ezra 1:4; Ex 12:35-36; Motyer's 'the purpose which lies behind it')

-MH's 'In all this Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and entrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect.'

-4b's given a 'title of honor'– by God's people and the world

-> 3b,4a's 'summons you by name' even though 4b, 5b's 'you do not acknowledge me'; Motyer's 'Such is the Lord's sovereignty that he does not require the willing or knowing cooperation of those he so uses.'

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<sup>21</sup> MH's 'We must not expect salvation without righteousness, for they spring up together...Christ died to save us from our sins, not in our sins.' (Ps 85:9-11)

<sup>22</sup> Translated into Gr. 'christos' (see: Christ, christen); labeling Jesus as 'the Christ' was meant to denote him as the Jewish Messiah. Not until inter-testamental times that the term became a title– 'the anointed' (Pss. Sol. 17:36, 18:8, I Enoch 48:10, 42:4); see also: NT times of Jesus the Christ (Jn 1:20, Mt 16:15ff, Acts 2:36). 'Messiah' came to mean 'the Son of David' who would appear as a messianic king (Mt 21:5,9, 22:42, Acts 1:16, 2:25, 2:29-31,34-36), as a re-continuance of the Davidic dynasty (II Sam 7:11-16, 23:5; Ps 2, 45, 72, 89, 110; Is 9:1-6ff, 11:1, Jer 33:14-20ff, 23:5ff, 30:9, Ez 34:23ff, etc.)

-> all this, so that 3b,6's 'you/everyone may know that I am the Lord'<sup>23</sup> – and that 5,6's there is no other

-see: 7's Lord of Creation ('light/prosperity' and 'darkness/disaster' representing good/bad and the natural order of things<sup>24</sup>)

-see: 1's Lord of Prophecy/History

-again, Motyer's 'If this is the work of an unknown prophet ministering in Babylon after the rise of Cyrus, then the argument from prediction is deprived of force, for then the Lord too, like the idol-gods, is only wise after the event.'

-knowledge of God had been promised thru Abraham (Gen 12:3, 22:18) and the Davidic king (Ps 72:8-11); Motyer's 'Isaiah is linking these very treasured ideas with Cyrus.'

#### **45:9-13** in light of God's plans...

-9-10,12's woe to those who 'quarrel with' or deny their creator– as in parent/child, potter/pot relationships<sup>25</sup> ('potsherd' as broken piece of pottery)

-the irony of doing either (Rom 9:20-21)

-applied specifically to 11's questioning God's methods (as parent/potter) in appointing Cyrus– either real/contemporary or future/likely; Motyer's 'Either way, it stands to reason that the news of a Gentile liberator would not receive an ecstatic welcome.'

-in faith, one wouldn't ask in this manner; w/o faith, none of their business!

-a problem for pride, and again, prospectively a problem for God's promises (how/why would a stronger Gentile conqueror free them?!)

-on the latter, Motyer's 'We, of course, have the benefit of hindsight and know that the breaking of the nation-mold of the people of God was deliberate, in order that the ultimate form of Israel might emerge in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We also know that the submission of the Gentiles is secured by the submission of believers

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<sup>23</sup> 5x in ch. 45; 9x in chs. 43-46 (see also: 40:18,25). Note Motyer's 'theme of widening purpose' – same phrase used to indicate this was for 3's Cyrus, 4's Israel, and 6's the world. Motyer observes that the use of Jacob and then Israel 'is a reminder of the power of the Lord to transform and of the responsibility of those who find the Jacob-nature still strong in them to live rather according to their God-given new nature as Israel.'

<sup>24</sup> 45:7's 'do all things' as an inclusio with 44:2's 'made all things'

<sup>25</sup> Motyer points to the irony of verse 11 followed by the sarcasm of verse 12, paraphrasing 'Please feel free to give me your orders...After all, I am only the Creator.'

world-wide to the gospel. But Isaiah's folk could see only a cruel blow to their hopes, the exchange of one subjugation for another, and their logic was right.'

-> 13's Cyrus: 'raised up...in God's righteousness', helped by God, would rebuild Jerusalem and send the exiles/captives (61:1) home- 'but not for a price or reward' (vs. 45:3?; motives vs. outcome)

#### **45:14-17**

-14a's products of Egypt, Cush and the 'tall' Sabeans 'will be yours' (a la Exodus; Ezra 1:4)-- not out of weakness but wealth and power [tall])

-resulting in 14b's voluntary submission in humility- 'they will trudge behind you...in chains', bowing to them and worshiping God

-sounds military, but meant spiritually

-as intended for Israel (2:2-4; Est 8:17, Zech 8:23); Motyer's 'the magnetism the people of God were intended to exercise'

-fulfilled most fully in the NT church (Rom 15:18, 21:24)

-15's God 'hides Himself' (54:8a; vs. 45:19) as the 'Savior of Israel'

-powerful, but behind the scenes (55:8-9; see: Cyrus)

-given vs. 14, Israel may represent all of God's people, incl. Gentiles

-said by Gentiles in response to a God who had never previously attracted their attention- or by Israel in response to how things would turn out

-on the latter, Motyer's 'how concealed indeed are the purposes of God when the enforced submission of Israel to the Gentile Cyrus is but a passing veil over the ultimate truth of Gentile submission to Israel! Who but the Lord could bring the Gentiles to Israel by appearing to do the reverse?'

-16's idolmakers will be shamed and 'go off into disgrace together'

- 'will go off'- same as 14's 'will trudge behind you'; Motyer's 'These are alternative destinies, conditional on being joined to the Lord's people or to idols.'

-vs. 17's Israel's everlasting salvation (54:8b), never to be 'put to shame'- pointing to God and points forward to spiritual matters in ch. 49ff (vs. merely deliverance from exile)

#### **45:18-25**

-18's Lord of Creation

-19's God reveals Himself openly and in truth (vs. 15's claim)- and wants to be found (Pr 1:20, 8:1, Jn 18:20)

-> 18-19's God revealing Himself in nature and in revelation/reason (Rom 1:20, 2:14-15)

-20-21's court case, idolater ignorance, prophecy fulfilled by God alone (all revisited)

-20a's 'fugitives' as Israel in broad context, but new Gentile believers in immediate context<sup>26</sup> – escaping the fate of idolaters and fulfilling God's world-wide ('nations') plans<sup>27</sup>

-21b's God as 'righteous' and 'Savior' – MH's 'fit to rule' and 'able to help'

→ 22a's 'turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth' – invitation to all, seemingly connected to 14's world turning to Israel and 17's Israel turning to God

-Motyer's 'The principle is that those who would enjoy the truth must first be received among those who already possess it, but once received they discover that there are no grades of membership but an equality. Since in Isaiah's time the people of God, his "church", was constituted as a nation among nations, the incoming of the Gentiles is represented in terms of national surrender, but we need to be careful not to confuse the motif with the reality.'

-23-24a's God's own prophecy/oath (Gen 22:16; Heb 6:13) that 'every knee will bow' and 'by God, every tongue will swear' (Phil 2:9-11) – His righteousness and strength

-24b's those 'who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame' vs. 25's faithful remnant (the *true* 'descendants of Israel' vs. Israel as nation or ethnicity, given the context; Ps 87:4-6) will be found 'righteous and will exult'

## **Chapter 46** (skim/skip)

-1-2's Babylonian idols – which are a physical (and spiritual) burden, 'unable to rescue' and themselves sent into captivity<sup>28</sup> (vs. I Sam 5-8)

-see: Bel/Belshazzar; Nebu/Nebuchadnezzar

-3-5's there's no one like God (revisited; 40:18,25) – who made them, has upheld/carried them, and will sustain/carry/rescue them 'even to your old age'; past, present and future

-vs. 1-2's idols that are made and carried by men (vs. Mt 11:28-30); MH's 'more like a dead corpse than a living God'

-the absurdity of elevating any creation above its creator

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<sup>26</sup> Proponents of a deutero-Isaiah are particularly hard-pressed to explain the context here.

<sup>27</sup> See: 2:2-4, 9:1, 11:10, 19:23-25, 25:6-9, 27:13, 42:1-4.

<sup>28</sup> Motyer notes an example of this earlier in Babylon's history (p. 368).

- 6-7's idols made and worshiped but cannot 'move' (must be carried!), 'answer', or 'save'— despite value of resources used to make it or the passion of its followers
  - on the former, MH's 'The service of sin often proves very expensive.'
- 8-10's 'remember', etc.; no one other than God and prophecy (revisited)
  - on vs. 8, Motyer's 'This proves to be Isaiah's final appeal to Israel to accept the Lord's will.'
- 11-13's God's use of Cyrus/Babylon to fulfill His long-prophesied plans and bring His righteousness, salvation and splendor 'near' to Israel, despite Isaiah's continued sense that his listeners were deaf to his appeals (8's 'rebels')

### **Chapter 47** (skim/read)

- 4's interjection of God as 'our Redeemer', 'Lord Almighty', 'the Holy One of Israel'— a reminder that the above is meant as an encouragement to Israel
- 1-3's end of the line for Babylonian reign, pride, and prosperity; her 'nakedness [is] exposed' (Ez 16:36) as God takes vengeance— 'virgin' (impregnable in terms of her defenses) no more...
  - role reversal of status and experience they had imposed on others
  - again, impressive given that, when Isaiah prophesied this, Babylon was still a second-rate power vs. Assyria
  - at least implicitly, giving Babylon access to God's word/prophecy— and an op to repent (a la Jonah & Nineveh/Assyria)
    - MH's 'Infinite Wisdom could have ordered things so that Israel might have been released and yet Babylon unhurt; but if they will harden their hearts, and will not let the people go, they must thank themselves that their ruin is made to pave the way to Israel's release.'
- 5's silence, darkness and no more queening (Rev 18:7-8)-- as loss of authority, liberty (darkness of captivity), and position
  - all this justified by 6's evil-- showing no mercy and laying 'a very heavy yoke' on the most vulnerable; 7's pride and ignorance (incl. lack of thought about what they had done)
    - Babylon given power by God over Israel for disobedience, but had violated His will by abusing that power
  - despite 8a's feeling very secure; 8b's believing they'd never be widowed or lose children (Ruth 1:5)
    - 10's trusting in their wickedness— thinking that no one would hold them accountable (although they probably wouldn't see it that way!)-- and their wisdom
      - former as same word as 11's 'disaster'; Motyer's 'They embraced evil and evil is what they will get.'

-on the latter, MH's 'Babylon pretended to great wisdom and knowledge, but with all her knowledge she cannot foresee, nor with all her wisdom prevent, the ruin threatened.'

-> concluding that 8,10's 'there is none besides me'- deity-like claim (vs. 46:9, etc.!: Rom 1:28)

-is 8,10's 'I am' the same as Ex 3:14?!

-> but 9a's 'both of these will overtake you in a moment...in full measure'

-despite 9b,12's sarcastic ref to sorcery; 13's counsel, astrologers (Dan 5:7-8)- 12b's powerless, 13's ignorant, and 14-15's 'like stubble...cannot even save themselves' (Mal 4:1)

-13's 'worn you out' may allude to the effort inherent in polytheism; Motyer's 'Commitment, discipline and effort are a true part of religion, but when allied to the worthless, they are only a weariness.'

### **Chapter 48** (skim/read)

-> Isaiah pretty rough on Israel in this chapter- a bit odd for a section based on 'comfort'<sup>29</sup>: Motyer's 'Would Isaiah have spoken in this way? Having reached the end of [this] section...we ought rather to ask could he have spoken in any other way? Chapter 48 is the inevitable climax of a rising tide of awareness of Israel's sin and need<sup>30</sup> ...Chapter 48 stands out from chs. 40-47 not because it is alien but because it is climactic.'

-1-2's opening address to the Israelites- labeled themselves Israel ('the people of God'; w/ app. to self-professing C's), in the line of Judah, take oaths in God's name, call themselves 'citizens of the holy city', and invoke God- 'but not in truth or righteousness', not genuine or in comparison to God's moral norms

-3-6a's events prophesied and then fulfilled (Lev 26:31-46, Dt 29:22-30:10)

-so that they would not ascribe the cause/effect to idols

-but recognizing their stubbornness- 4's neck of iron and forehead of bronze

-on the former, MH's 'unapt to yield and submit to the yoke of God's commandments, unapt to turn and look back upon his dealings with them or look up to [him]...'

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<sup>29</sup> Motyer notes that most concern is based on 'apparently abrupt changes of mood' before noting that 'It is, of course, essential to ask (and for those who would excise verses to explain) why a late editor should ever have inserted such material, if it is so plainly misplaced.'

<sup>30</sup> See: Motyer's string of evidence- p. 375.

- 6b-7's new things to soon be revealed (48:16; 42:9, 65:17)
  - vs. 8's no use in revealing them previously, given their deafness, treachery, and rebellion (and earlier prophesies of same)
    - despite this, 9's wrath held back, but instead 10's refining them (43:2; Mal 3:3) 'in the furnace of affliction'– making them fit for His mercy ('though not as silver' may imply that they all dross!; 1:22; Ps 119:119, Jer 6:30)–
    - 11's all for His own glory and Name
- 12-15's God as 'first and last', Lord of Creation, God vs. idols– in terms of foretelling and doing powerful things (incl. the fall of Babylon) thru 'him' (Cyrus)
  - 12a's Jacob/Israel as 'called' by God– vs. 1-2's calling themselves improperly 'the people of God'; Motyer's 'Their unfaithfulness does not nullify the faithfulness of God.'
- 16-22's revelation as...
  - 16's the newest version of old news (48:6), incl. 'not spoken in secret' (45:19; Hab 2:2; see: Mt. Sinai, judges, prophets, theophanies, miracles) and 'has sent me with His Spirit' (42:1, 61:1)– anticipates ch. 49ff's Servant
  - 17b's God 'teaches you what is best for you [and] directs you in the way you should go'– God wants our best interests! (Jer 29:11)
  - 18-19's if only they followed him, peace, righteousness, prosperity and honor would have followed in abundance
  - 20's flee Babylon (Rev 18:4); 21's God will rescue them from their thirst in the desert
    - parallels the Exodus (Ex 17:6, Num 20:11)– Motyer's 'in particular, recalling its tension between a grumbling, unbelieving people and a merciful, provident God.'
    - but 22's 'no peace (shalom??; 'rest') for the wicked' (57:21)
      - w/ app. to all non-believing Israelites (Motyer's 'A change of scene does not bring a change of heart...To come home to Canaan is not to come back to God.')-- and today, non-C's including those 'in' the church
- > in response to 42:18-43:21's national bondage, God will send Cyrus to free the captives and send them home to rebuild, but 43:22-44:23's sin problem remains– extended by Israel's response to God's program for political restoration (45:9-13's plan greeted with hostility, 46:8's rebellion, 46:12's stubborn and sinful-- and here in ch. 48, Motyer's 'the very chapter which announces their liberation, is a storm-center of denunciation...')
  - Motyer's 'As they come to the end of the captivity, the problem of liberation is solved thru divine redemptive action, but the problem of sin remains.'
  - Motyer's 'Thus, when they leave Babylon, they do so with the Lord's sad comment that "there is no peace for the wicked". In a word, liberation solves only

one problem, but in the meantime the need for a solution to the deeper problem of sin has become ever more urgent. So, Cyrus enters and leaves the stage of history. His task, the lesser solution, is done; the greater task awaits the greater servant.'

## Isaiah 49-50

### review/intro:

-God's servants in Is 40-48: historical Israel's failure and Cyrus' limited success (as God's shepherd, anointed, one of Israel's best kings!)

-God using Cyrus to deal with Israel's political problem, but sin problem remains—to be dealt with by the Superior Servant, Jesus Christ

-see: 48:20-21's op for new beginning vs. 48:22's 'no peace for the wicked'

### 49:1-6

-> the second of the four Servant Songs; strong parallels with the first Song (ch. 42)<sup>31</sup>

-can be read politically, but meant spiritually; release from spiritual (vs. political) bondage into a freedom of truth; pilgrimage of mind and heart (vs. feet)

-in the first Song, given a world-wide task with an emphasis on the inclusion of the Gentiles; here, called to both Jew & Gentile (former's need now clearly revealed)

-1a's prologue announcement to 'islands...nations' (41:1)—totality of Gentile world

-'listen' marks the servant ('I') as a prophet

-'listen to me'—only used in Isaiah, and only then, of the Lord (46:3,12, 48:12, 51:1,7, 55:2)—marks the servant as 'more divine' than merely a prophet

-3's subject: Israel as God's servant—'in whom I will display my splendor'

-Israel as fig. for ancestor to Christ, Jacob (Israel as indiv.), an idealized Israel, or even Isaiah—*given 5's mission to Israel* and Israel's failure as servant (e.g. 48:1-2; in chs. 49-55, national Israel is labeled 'Zion')

-1b-2's background and prep for ministry:

-1b's 'called' by God from fig. 'birth' (7:14; Gen 3:15, Mic 5:2; Lk 1:76-79; Ps 22:9, Gen 12:3, Jer 1:5, Gal 1:15)

-2a's 'made my mouth like a sharpened sword'—spiritual vs. political/military (1:20, 11:4; Eph 6:17, Heb 4:12, Rev 1:16, 2:12,16, 19:15)

-2b's 'hid me...in the shadow of his hand'

-speaks to intimacy of relationship

-the seemingly 'secret' nature of God's hand (always there, but not evident unless you're looking for it)

-w/ app. to the revelation of Christ as Messiah

-2c's 'polished arrow...in his quiver' (Dt 32:23,42, Ps 45:5, 64:3-4, Eph 6:16)

-> 2's 'sharpened sword' and 'polished arrow' as effectiveness and accuracy; dealing with enemies near and far (totality)

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<sup>31</sup> See: release of prisoners (42:7, 49:9a), journey to a new land (42:16, 49:9b-12).

-4's self-assessment of ministry:

-4a's 'labored to no purpose...spent my strength in vain'

-perhaps surprising from Christ, but note Gethsemane and 'forsaken' on the cross-- or certainly, Christ's ministry in general (Mk 8:21, 14:27, Lk 9:41, Jn 1:10-11, etc.; Motyer: 'Maybe what was diffused throughout our Lord's whole earthly course, Isaiah compresses into a single moment.')

-also easy to see Isaiah's potential frustrations here, even in light of his original call (6:9-13a; w/ app.)

-in any case, speaks to the difficulty and seeming failure of their ministries

-> but not the end of the story...

-4b's understanding that his faithfulness results in an earned and sure ('in [His] hand'-- as 49:2) reward (50:8, 53:10-12; Phil 2:10-11, I Tim 3:16)-- because God is faithful

-MH's 'Though the labor be in vain as to those that are labored with, yet not as to the laborer himself, if he be faithful.'

-4a's despondency yields to 4b's trust in God; Motyer's 'Thus, Isaiah foresaw a Servant with a real human nature, tested like we are and proving himself to be the author and perfecter of the way of faith-- a real, personal faith that can still say *my God* when nothing any longer seems worthwhile.'

-see also: 4b's 'what is due me' (?!)- as limited credit for Servant's human P, or more likely, full-credit for a human-divine Servant's P

-5-6's God's response

-> in general, God's word as His answer to our despondency; in combo with 4b's trust, Motyer's 'Despondency arises thru listening to ourselves and our self-assessment-- instead of looking to God, recalling his purposes, living according to our dignity in him, and rediscovering in him our source of power.'

-5's God as 'he who formed me', had called him to 'bring/gather Jacob/Israel back to him', had been honored by God, and who 'has been my strength' (though I failed to see it for awhile-- or 'has become my strength', in a new appropriation of eternal reality)

-6a's 'too small a thing' for him to merely 'restore the tribes of Jacob'; 6b's 'will also make you a light for the Gentiles' (42:6; Lk 1:79, 2:32)-- 'that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth' (42:4)

-along with Gen 12:1-3, considered the Great Commission of the OT (quoted in Acts 13:47)-- but only Christ can fulfill this promise<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Motyer argues for 'that you may *be* my salvation', paralleling 6a's 'to *be* my servant'.

**49:7-13's** tailpiece to the 2<sup>nd</sup> servant song– divine confirmation of the Servant's mission

-7a's God as 'Redeemer and Holy One of Israel' (revisited)

-7c's 'the servant of rulers' (Lk 22:25-27)– to be 'despised and abhorred' by 'the nation'

-but 7d's kings/princes will honor/worship him because of God

-> both the Servant's early rejection and His later reverence prefigure later discussion and are left unexplained here, aside from alluding to God's faithfulness...

-8a's 'in the time/day of my favor/salvation, I will answer/help you' (61:1-2; quoted in II Cor 6:2)

-incl. 8b's 'I will make you to be a covenant for the people'

- 'people' as Gentile and Jew (vs. 42:6)

-on 'covenant', see: Christ and the NC; again, Isaiah is describing a Superior Servant

-Motyer's 'Prophets preached the covenant and pointed away from themselves to the Lord; the Servant will actualize the blessings [of the Covenant] and point to himself.'

-see also: the inspiration of Scripture!

-8c's 'to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances' (44:26b; Messiah as a new Joshua)

-9a's to release the captives and those in darkness (42:6-7; Lk 4:18-19; Messiah as a new Moses; see: 9a's "come out" a la Rev 17-18)

-9b-10's 'they will...' be nourished, satisfied, protected, and led by God (Rev 7:16-17)

-speaks to provision, protection, and guidance– as had been the case in the Wilderness, between Egypt (Moses) and Canaan (Joshua)

-10a's inner failure (hunger and thirst) and 10b's outer threat (heat and sun; former as parched ground– pair as totality)

-11's God would make it easy for them to come (35:8, 40:3-5)– even the mountains (representing barriers) are His!

-12's they would come from afar (and from all over)– no consideration of distance or location

- 'Aswan' as prob. south; if so, Isaiah omits east– presumably to avoid confusion with return from Babylonian exile

-> 13's worship because God 'comforts his people' and 'will have compassion on his afflicted ones'– again, both faithful Jews and Gentiles

## 49:14-21

-14's 'But...' Israel thought that God had 'forsaken/forgotten' them!

-contrast of 14's complaint vs. 13's praise; Israel as 'Zion' (revisited)

-Motyer's 'The sense of anticlimax at 49:14 [after 49:8-13] could hardly be stronger.' (as 40:27 following 40:1-26)

-a function of improper expectations about what God would do; and without faith, everything was hidden in the quiver

-14b's 2<sup>nd</sup> ref to 'Lord' as Heb. 'Adonai', meaning 'master' or 'sovereign'— but they don't act like it or believe it!

-vs. 50:4,5,7,9's Servant's 4 \* acknowledgment of 'Sovereign Lord'

-Israel is offered every inducement for faith and yet does not believe vs. the Servant who endures persecution and seeming failure and yet does believe

-> in any case, God patiently answers them: 15's it's not possible, by analogy to mother/child (Ps 27:10); MH's 'her own breasts will soon put her in mind of it if she should forget it' (!)

-16's in fact, 'I have engraved you on the palms of my hands' and 'your walls are ever before me'

-on the former, see: writing on one's hands as a reminder or branding with a mark; see also: Christ's hands on the cross (Jn 20:19-20)

-latter as if a city or Ex 28:9-12's ephod

-17-21's prophecy, incl.

-17a,18a's faithful remnant ('sons') returns

-18b's wedding adornment (Rev 19:7-8; from 17's mother to 18's bride)

-17b,19b's oppressors leave

-19a,20's not enough room for all the people (vs. 5:9, 6:11; Zech 8:5, Mal 3:10, Lk 14:21-22, Gal 4:27)— to 21's surprise (54:1, 66:8)

-some pre-M's see a fuller Israel here

-> Motyer's 'This is, of course, the terminology of the return from Babylon put to a new use. Such a triumphant return, with superabundant numbers, could have been true in 539 BC, but only a meager few responded to Cyrus' liberation edict...But Isaiah has left all that behind at 48:20-21. His focus now is on spiritual reality, people returning to the Lord due to a divine work of salvation and redemption...the picture is not that of a population explosion while in exile with more returning than ever went. Other as yet unexplained factors are involved.'

-> ideal response to 14's question/despondency: focus on 15-16's character of God; 17-18a's promises of God; 18b-21's word of God

## 49:22-26

-22a's God will call to the Gentiles

-> 22b's they will come, bringing Israel's children with them (60:4); 23a's Gentile rulers will serve them (Ps 72:11, Rev 3:9)

-> 23b's 'then you will know' that He is God (45:14,18,21)

-24-25a's plunder taken back and captives returned?

-surprising in light of God's judgment and Babylon's power; w/ app. to our salvation/redemption

-> 25b-26a's Yes, by God...- as He had done for them with Egypt; and in return for what they had done to others (see also: Rev 17-18)

-drawing on the picture of a siege to illustrate the self-destruction inherent in choosing to go one's own way (50:11; Jud 7:22, I Sam 14:20, II Chron 28:23)

-> 26b's 'then all mankind will know...' that He is God and Israel's Savior

## 50:1-3

-1's analogies: God had divorced- or been accused of divorce by-- Israel (!; 54:6-7, 62:4; Dt 24:1, Jer 3:8) and sold them to creditors because of their sin (Ps 44:12)

-returning to 49:15-18a's mother/wife and 49:22-26's slavery; Motyer's 'Divorce accuses the unfailing love of failure; sale into slavery accuses sovereign power of weakness.'

-> looking for evidence that Israel's problems began on God's side, but...

-1a's God had been a faithful husband to them (vs. Dt 24:1, Mt 19:7!)

-if divorce, MH's 'It was true they were now separated from him...but whose fault was that?'

-if not, Motyer's 'The absence of a certificate [of divorce] would indicate that this process had not even been started and that, therefore, the door was open to reconciliation.'

-1b's God had been a father to them, not selling them into slavery to pay off His debts, but allowing the consequences of their sin free rein (II Chron 12:5,8)

-MH's 'When God chastens his children, it is neither for pleasure (Heb 12:10) nor for his profit.'

-> in any case, 2a's when God tried to 'rescue/ransom', Israel wasn't interested (5:4; finishes the answer to 49:14's Q)

-2's God had tried (being both able and willing) to rescue them (a la Hosea)- despite their sin and rebellion- thru prophets and second-chances (as Hezekiah vs. Sennacherib); now the Babylonians followed by Cyrus; eventually, Christ (Mt 23:37-38, Lk 19:41-42)

-on God's ability, see also: 2b-3's His power, incl. 2's 'dry up the sea' (a la

Egypt) and 'rivers into a desert' (a la Babylon); 2's fish and 3's darkness may allude to plagues (Ex 7:17-18; 10:21-23)

-> God seeming to be distant- or even pulling away to test our faith; but often when we think this, it is because we have forgotten- or moved away from God; story of middle-aged couple in a car behind a young couple sitting next to each other in their car  
-> in contrast to 1-3's unresponsiveness of a faithless people (Motyer's 'Up to that point, the Lord heaps promise upon promise...but it is all to no avail.'). 4-9's testimony of the faithful Servant and 10-1's call to similar faithfulness...

### 50:4-9

-> 3<sup>rd</sup> of four Servant Songs, although the Servant is not mentioned...

-4a's God had given Isaiah/Christ 'an instructed tongue' (Ex 4:11-12)- 'to know the word that sustains the weary' (40:28-31, 42:2-3; vs. 49:2!; Jer 31:25, Mt 11:28-30; see also: Counselor/Spirit)

-connected to 4b's 'wakens me morning by morning...wakens my ear to listen like one being taught'

-for Isaiah, the discipline of day-to-day learning or God actually waking him to be taught (Ez 3:17); or fig. for Christ as teachable/obedient/humble  
-'taught' as 8:16's 'disciple'; Motyer's 'The Servant comes before us as the disciple *par excellence*.'

-5a's God's P: He 'has opened my ears'; 5b's Isaiah/Christ's P: 'I have not been rebellious' or 'drawn back'

-> from 4-5's God preparing him for ministry to 6-9's God standing by him in adversity  
-resulted in 6's ministry- humble and persistent servanthood (I Pet 2:22-23), even to the point of painful persecution, despite or because of his obedience

-ironic/surprising/sad given his ministry to the 'weary'

-alludes to Isaiah at least fig.; specifics fulfilled in Christ (Mk 14:65, 15:16-20) and as a brief intro to Ch. 53's suffering

-Motyer's 'Not a suffering because of wrongdoing but thru costly obedience; a suffering not merited but accepted, described in terms of the judicial act of flogging, gratuitous torture and personal humiliation. Isaiah does not name the Servant but offers a clue: where there is this threefold suffering, there is the Servant.'

-7a's God's P: He 'helps me' and 'I will not be disgraced'; 7b's Isaiah/Christ's P: 'therefore [I have] set my face like flint' (Jer 1:18, Ez 3:8-9, Lk 9:51) and 'I will not be put to shame' (vs. 49:7)

-Motyer's 'Out of this *confidence* of help comes certainty of the outcome and resolute determination to carry things thru to success.'

-MH's 'The Redeemer is as famous for his boldness as for his humility and

patience.'

-8-9's God will vindicate him vs. who could accuse him (52:13, 53:10-12; I Tim 3:16)

-ironically, picturing this as a court trial- one of Isaiah's favorite literary tools, but also key to the end of Christ's life

-> Servant (vs. the people of Israel): 4's listens, 5's learns and does not rebel, and 7-9's resting in a confident faith in God's power and love (vs. 2's 'no one...' \* 2); 6's obeys despite the cost of suffering (vs. 1's disobedience causing suffering); 8-9's innocence (vs. 1's sin)

### **50:10-11**<sup>33</sup>

-10's call to fear (66:2; Ps 119:120) and obey to God, to trust in God and His name

-address to him 'who walks in the dark'- either God at least seeming to pull away (e.g., as in exile) or because they have been in sin for a time

-trusting in the midst of trial or repenting in the midst of sin

-vs. 11's those who go by their own light will be destroyed by it

-ironic picture of self-reliance/righteousness (Job 18:5-6)

-> MH's 'The prophet, having the tongue of the learned given him (50:4)...here makes use of it...It is the summary of the gospel: he that believes shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned.'

-> 10's following the Servant vs. 11's self-sufficiency; both 'walk'- in God-allowed darkness (!; points to trust) vs. self-created (weak) light; one leans on God vs. other who lies down in torment

-an early/clear reference to grace vs. works for salvation

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<sup>33</sup> The tailpiece to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Servant Song. In the first two songs, the tailpiece serves to give divine confirmation of the servant's task; in the last two songs, the tailpieces exhort people to respond favorably to the Servant, by emulating him.

### *Isaiah 51-55 (except ch. 53!)*

-> chs. 49-50's intro to the Servant- here, following up on 50:10's faithful response to the example of the Servant...

#### **51:1-8**<sup>34</sup>

-1-3's history lesson and subsequent call to faith and perseverance in hope: consider Abraham and his call- and God's grace, faithfulness, and ability to prosper

-w/ app. to what God can do thru a faithful few (even one!)

-MH's 'It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth to consider what they were by their first birth...How hard was that rock out of which we were hewn...and how miserable the hole of that [quarry] out of which we were dug. The consideration of this should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves and high thoughts of divine grace.'

-4-5a's God would extend His Law, justice (\*2), righteousness, and salvation throughout the world (49:6)- by His 'arm' (51:9, 52:10, 53:1)

-on 5's 'arm' \* 2, the first reference to 'arm' as lit. 'arms'; Isaiah may use the plural to amplify or to contrast with the latter reference to 'arm'- indicating a special divine activity (a la 53:1!; 'arms' accomplish 'justice', but only *the* 'arm' accomplishes 'hope')

-5b's Gentiles will turn to God and hope in Him

-6's destruction of old, seemingly-durable things vs. eternity of God and His salvation/righteousness (along with His word- Mt 24:35)

-> 7's call to do what is right<sup>35</sup>, despite persecution (as the Servant in 50:6-7), given 8a's their future judgment and 8b's God's eternal righteousness/salvation (Mt 28:20, Heb 5:9)

-Motyer's 'Great things lie ahead, but the interim is not easy...Opposition [can come] with a terrifying appearance of strength and endlessness, but to yield to it means leaving the eternal for the temporary.'

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<sup>34</sup> On the style of chs. 51-52, Motyer's 'Mounting excitement characterizes this section. The prophet's thoughts...and his high-strung emotion find vent in short, impassioned oracles.'

<sup>35</sup> 7's 'know what is right' as lit. 'know righteousness'- implies intimate knowledge of Truth that comes from relationship with God.

## 51:9-16

-> 1-8's promises lead to 9-11's prayer and then 12-16's assurance<sup>36</sup>

-9-11's call for God to 'awake' (!; I Kings 18:27) and to move in power- ultimately remembering God's promise that the faithful remnant will return in joy (35:10)

-9a's 'awake' \* 3 as emotional intensity; Motyer's 'Here, to the human eye, it seems as if the Lord has gone to sleep over his promises.'

-10b's drying up the sea to make it a road for them to cross- God's sovereign ability to turn seeming disaster into blessing

-> a urgent but faithful prayer for another Exodus<sup>37</sup>; Motyer's 'Thus the impassioned prayer of verse 9 modulates under the influence of 10's historical certainties into the key of confident faith.'

-12a's God speaks as comforter ('I, even I' matches intensity of 9's 'awake' \*2), but 12b-13's notes their fear and 'constant terror' of 'mortal men' (Ps 9:20)- 'who are but grass'-- because they 'forget' the Creator God

-not receiving a new providence, but realizing/appropriating a very old promise -w/ app. to us, MH's 'Our inordinate fear of man is a tacit forgetfulness of God. When we disquiet *ourselves* with the fear of man we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and overrules all events according to the counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us...' (8:12-13; Lk 12:4-5)

-14's prophecy graciously reiterated: the captives will live and be set free- could be political (except Babylon was rel. comfy); must be spiritual (revisited; see: Motyer, p. 412)

-15-16's God again speaks as the One who sustains/controls Creation- and His commitment to protect His people

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<sup>36</sup> Apparently opponents of Isaiah as sole author point to this passage as a key stumbling block. Motyer defends against this assertion (p. 410-411).

<sup>37</sup> Motyer asks why Isaiah uses such 'coded terms' before concluding that this language allows him to address Babylonian idolatry, specifically it's creation story (p. 408). Motyer notes 9's 'days' and 'generations' as historical language for God's actions vs. vague Babylonian myth/legend. 'What in Babylon is pre-history, a mere rumor of divine prowess, in Isreal is identified with historical events...it is a matter of the verified acts of the Lord offering a sure ground for faith. Without history, theology is surmise.' Motyer notes that 10's 'the sea' is Heb. 'yam'- which is also the name of the mythological foe defeated by Baal. 'Once more Isaiah offers history in the place of mythology, for the Lord's conquest of *yam* took place before witnesses at the Red Sea.' See also: Job 26:11-12, Ps 89:8, Amos 9:3.

### 51:17-23

-17a's call for Jerusalem to 'awake' (\*2; vs. 51:9!)- MH's 'not so much out of the sleep of sin as out of the stupor of despair' (Rom 11:8)

-vs. 17b,20b's drunk off 'the cup of God's wrath'- 'drained to its dregs'

-18,20a's inability of any of its own people (human means) to help, alluding to sons who were supposed to care for elderly parents

-19's 'double calamities'- 'famine and sword' (47:9)- and back to the key theme: 19b's 'who can console (*comfort*) you?'

-21-23's prophecy that God would take 'the cup' from them and give it to their oppressors

-Motyer's 'Somehow, while the drunken stupor lasted, the Lord acted for the helpless one.'- it's all about grace!

### 52:1-6

-1a's call for Jerusalem to 'awake' (\*2; 51:9,17)- here, to enjoy their new God-given condition

-1-2's 'clothe yourself' with strength, splendor, holiness, power, and freedom (all as God's P, but also their P; Col 3:9-10)- vs. 2's dust and chains- because you will be a place for believers, never to be entered again by 'the uncircumcised and the defiled'

-easy to see why this would be interpreted politically by contemporaries!

-Israel probably imagined this as a re-establishment of the Aaronic priesthood (priestly garments) and esp. the Davidic kingdom (2's 'enthroned')-- but meant as a spiritual fulfillment of Ex 19:5-6's vision

-today seen lit. by pre-M's as the millennium- or more fig. by others

-> in any case, holiness, etc. follows the removal of God's wrath (51:12-13)

-> all this begs the Q: how?! (not explained until ch. 53)

-> 3's ironic: 'sold for nothing' and would be bought back for free! (45:13, 50:1; Ps 44:12)

-not money, so how?! by God's grace thru the Servant's blood (ch. 53)...

-4-6's God seems to assess the situation, deciding to prophetically redeem His people from those who mock Him- so His people would know He is God

-4's Egypt and Assyria; Motyer's 'Isaiah reviews oppression from the A of Egypt to the Z of Assyria- the whole history of oppression as he had know it.'

-and if post-exilic, how could he ignore Babylon?

-5's God motivated by the misery of His people and the honor of His name

-6's 'know my name' as greater intimacy &/or a more profound revelation (NC)

## 52:7-12

-7's 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"'

-reference to messenger returning from battle (vs. stragglers returning in defeat; again, a military reference)- with mountains as no barrier

-future fulfillment in Christ, incl. His ministry (feet as action), our sharing the Gospel, Jn 13's feet cleaned from the dust of the world, and His feet nailed to the cross

-8-9's joy (55:12) as God 'returns' to Zion, comforting and redeeming His people

-> from 7's lone messenger to 8's watchmen to 9's city- the spread of the good news!

-10's 'the Lord will lay bare his holy arm'- in power and salvation (and perhaps alluding to Christ's vulnerability?)

-12's people would leave exile-- but not 'in haste' (as from Egypt- Ex 12:11, Dt 16:3) or 'in flight' (as Lev 26:36's punishment for disobedience)

-protected by God- 'will go before you...be your rear guard' (48:20; as in the Exodus- Ex 13:21, 14:19-20; Num 10:25, Josh 6:9; vs. Ex 17's trouble with Amalekites)

-Motyer's 'Isaiah is not referring to the Babylonian captives but rather is using the motifs of destruction, bondage, oppression, etc. to express the need for the spiritual redemption and return to the Lord which has been his theme since [ch. 49]. It is in this sense that the city is a wasteland, and it is this situation that has been remedied by the victory from which the Lord is returning to Zion.'

-> 11's call to avoid the unclean and to be pure<sup>38</sup>

-had brought idolatry with them out of Egypt (Ez 23:3); should (and largely did) avoid that mistake when leaving Babylon

-10's 'arm' action still left undefined; Motyer's 'The artistry of Isaiah is as much seen in his suspenseful withholding of information as in his use of words and images.'

-> likewise, we'll postpone the climactic ch. 53 until next week!...

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<sup>38</sup> Motyer notes that many commentators see return from Babylonian exile here- but argues against it since Isaiah's treatment of Cyrus and Babylon ended at Ch. 48 and his focus has been on spiritual redemption (p. 421). Motyer also notes that 'pure' is only used elsewhere in 49:2 as 'polished' in referring to the Servant. 'Is this the reason he uses such an out-of-the-way verb here: to imply that as the Servant is, so must the Lord's people be?'

-> chs. 54-55 follow ch. 53's full depiction of the Servant- His sufferings and death, His accomplishments, and His glory...

-wrt chs. 54-55, Motyer's 'The general relationship with ch. 53 is clear. In his saving work, the Servant has done everything-- removing sin, establishing in righteousness, creating a family. The way is therefore open for response, pure and simple: to sing over what someone else has accomplished (54:1) , to enjoy a feast for which someone else has paid (55:1).'

-wrt Ch. 54, MH's 'The death of Christ is the life of the church...therefore very fitly, after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretells the nourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exaltation of him which was the reward of his humiliation.'

### **54:1-5's family developed**

-1a's 'sing' (12:6, 44:23, 52:9)- GCM's 'This song naturally and necessarily celebrates the triumph of the Servant'

-1's 'barren/desolate' woman to rejoice because her children are now so numerous (49:19-20; revisiting ch. 52-53's 'many')

- 'woman' personifies fig. Jerusalem (the Church) or lit. before and within exile (49:21; vs. 62:4)

- 'barren' as lit.-- in that time, a tremendous disgrace (4:1); as fig., a picture of fruitlessness

-see also: Sarai (applied to her in Gal 4:27); as with Isaac, Motyer's 'The Lord's people [individually and corporately] are created by supernatural birth.'

-2's big tent revival (26:15, 33:20; see: idealized Wilderness time; Amos 9:11; w/ app. to ministry); 3's 'spread out' (Gen 28:14, Ex 1:12; as in Canaan), incl. crowd out nations and fill desolate cities

-> Motyer's 'In a very few words, Isaiah brings together the great promises (Abraham) and moments (Canaan) of the past and brightest hopes for the future.'

-4's shame of 'youth' and 'widowhood' to be forgotten (47:9)- perhaps alluding to Egypt (Jer 31:19, Ez 16:60) and Babylon

-in any case, Motyer's 'The essential point, however, is that from the early spring of youth right thru to the sadnesses life holds in store, all is subsumed under the category of things past and forgotten...'

-5's God as Husband and Redeemer

-former implies ability to produce and provide for children- vs. 1's no children, 4's widowhood

-5b's God of Israel- and then, 'all the earth'

-> again, reference to lit. Israel (the faithful remnant returning from exile) or fig. Israel (the Church)

-pre-M's take this and these sorts of passages literally (e.g., 6x in W&Z, chs. 54-55), but questionable in any case, and in context, Isaiah left the nation Israel behind after ch. 48

-> Motyer's 'the normative state of the community of the redeemed...brought into being by supernatural birth (1), designed for growth (2-3), and secure in the loving care of the Lord (4-5).'

### **54:6-10's marriage restored**

-6-8's husband (revisited)- here, 6's to 'call back' his (errant) wife (49:5,14, 50:1, 62:4-5; Ps 2:12, 71:11, Jer 2, Hos 3:1, Rev 19:7-9; vs. 53:4)

-7a's 'for a brief moment I abandoned you'; 8a's 'in a surge of anger (9:12,17,21) I hid my face [1:15; vs. turned my back] from you for a moment'

-lit. in that exile was rel. brief

-fig. contrasting 7b's 'deep compassion', 8b's 'everlasting kindness' (60:10)

-9-10's eternal 'covenant of peace' (9:6-7, 32:17-18, 48:18, 53:5, 54:13, 55:12, 66:12; Num 25:12-13, Ps 89:32-34, Jer 33:6-9,20-21, 46:27, Ez 37:26) compared to God's covenant with Noah post-flood (Gen 9:9-16)

-points to seriousness of the divine wrath, but moreso on the permanence of the solution

-10a's 'though the mountains be shaken...yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken' (51:6; alludes to Gen 7:19; Ps 46:2-3, Hab 3:6, Zech 4:7)

### **54:11-17's city rebuilt**

-> 11a's humiliation and 11b-17's exaltation of the church, paralleling same for the Servant in ch. 53

-11a's 'afflicted city (Jerusalem), lashed by storms and not comforted'

-11b-12's to be built up in beauty and radiance- with precious stones (as Rev 21:18-21's NJ; I Cor 3:12); Motyer's 'an impression of dazzling splendor'

-13a's 'all your sons will be taught by the Lord' (50:4; quoted in Jn 6:45; Jer 31:34, Jn 14:26, Eph 4:21)

-13b's 'great will be your children's peace'

-> 13's sons and children- a family created by God (53:10)

-14a's 'established' in righteousness

-14b's tyranny, fear, terror to become 'far' away; 15a's any attack 'will not be my doing'; 15b's those who attack will surrender

-16's God created the blacksmith, the weapons, and the 'destroyer' (incl. Assyria and Babylon)

-certainly sounds political/military, but note 17a's 'you will refute every tongue that accuses you' (as the Servant- 50:8-9)

-> 17b's 'the heritage of the servants of the Lord...their vindication<sup>39</sup> from me'

- 'servants' plural- no more refs in Isaiah to singular! (Here and 9x in chs. 63-66)

-> MH's summary of the chapter: 'Though the beginnings of it were small, it should be greatly enhanced...though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her...he would return in mercy...though for awhile she was in sorrow and under oppression, she would at length be advanced to greater honor and splendor...[and] be secured from the malice of her enemies.'

**55:1-3's** invite I<sup>40</sup>

-1's repeated/insistent exhortation: 'come' \* 4<sup>41</sup>, 2b's 'listen' \* 2, 3's 'give ear...hear me'

-1's commands: 'come to the waters', 'buy and eat', 'buy wine and milk'

- 'the waters'

-Christ as fountain that was opened and the rock that was struck; healing waters; living water

-MH's connect to foreign trade: waters as 'the market-place of foreign commodities; and to us they would have been forever foreign if Christ had not brought in an everlasting righteousness.'

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<sup>39</sup> Motyer: 'Vindication is an absurd mistranslation of righteousness.' (53:11)

<sup>40</sup> Motyer cites Smart who compares ch. 54 to Rev (NJ) and ch. 55 to John (in its call to follow the Gospel).

<sup>41</sup> NIV's first 'come' mistranslated the summon word, 'ho'. This then matches the threefold 'listen' (2c, 3ab) and the threefold guarantee: covenant, king, and Lord.

- ‘buy’ \* 2 (Rev 3:17-18) vs. ‘without money and without cost’ (Rom 6:23)
  - free, but “buy” implies a transaction; here, “purchase” requires the ‘effort’ of appropriating the gift; free, but correlated with giving up sin and willing to sacrifice even our lives (Mt 11:28)
    - faith is the coin of the Kingdom
    - MH’s ‘we can assure you that you shall have a good bargain’
    - MH’s ‘A strange way of buying, not only without ready money (that is common enough), but without any money or the promise of any.’
  - implies the gifts are invaluable/priceless (vs. irony that rel. worthless things cost money), already paid for (I Pet 1:19), and the Giver has no need for what we have– or even, for us
    - Motyer’s ‘There is a purchase and a price, though not theirs to pay. They bring their poverty to a transaction already completed.’
- ‘buy *and eat*’– ingest (making it ours moreso; able to nourish and strengthen), intimacy, and enjoy (vs. have but don’t eat)
- ‘wine and milk’ vs. water (only)
  - gracious abundance beyond merely satisfying thirst; Motyer’s ‘richness as well as the freeness’; MH’s ‘not only quench the thirst, but nourish the body and revive the spirits’
    - > do our lives look more like water or ‘wine and milk’ (Jn 10:10)
  - a picture of Christ outdoing our expectations; MH’s ‘We come to the waters...but we find there wine and milk’ (Eph 3:20)
  - a picture of growth in Christ; MH’s ‘We must come to Christ, to have milk for babes, to nourish and cherish those that are but lately born again; and with him, strong men shall find that which will be a cordial to them: they shall have wine to make glad their hearts.’
  - a picture of Christ– thru Judah (Gen 49:10-12)
- 1’s ‘all you who are thirsty’ (41:17, 44:3; Ps 42:1-2, 63:1, 81:10; Jn 4:13-14, 7:37-39)– ‘you who have no money’
  - ‘all’ vs. some; MH’s ‘in Christ there is enough for all and enough for each’
  - ‘thirst’ as the preeminent qualification; MH’s ‘Those that are satisfied with the world...those that depend upon the merit of their own works...these do not thirst.’
    - vs. drinking wrong stuff– at least they’re thirsty
- > vs. 2a’s ‘why spend money on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy?’ (44:20)
  - as lit./physical, drawing a comparison between relatively costly and ineffective food; MH’s ‘Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world help drive us to Christ, and lead us to seek for satisfaction in him only.’
  - as fig./spiritual, worthless self-effort vs. invaluable and effective grace of God

- > in any case, how pathetic to refuse the invitation (Heb 2:3a)...
- > 2b's 'eat what is good and your soul will delight in the richest of fare' (25:6; Ps 22:26a, 34:8a, Jer 31:14)- 3a's 'that your soul might live' (Jn 6:33,63)
- 3b's 'an everlasting covenant...my faithful love promised to David' (61:8; II Sam 7:13-16, 23:5, II Chron 6:42, Ps 89:28-29, Jer 32:40, 33:25-26<sup>42</sup>)
- 'covenant' as NC (Heb 13:20) &/or the Davidic covenant that culminates in Christ (9:7; quoted in Acts 13:34)

## 55:4-7

### -4-5's Servant and His mission

- 4's 'a witness to' and 'a leader and commander of' the people- ref to David (I Sam 13:14, 25:30; Ps 18:43) &/or Christ
  - witness to truth; lead us to and choosing us (pre-dest.?)for truth
- 5a's 'you will summon nations' and they 'will hasten' (2:2-4; Zech 8:22)- those 'you know not' (fig.) and 'do not know you' (Ruth 2:11, Gal 4:9)
  - 5b's because of God who 'has endowed [him] with splendor'

### -6-7's invite II

- 6's 'seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near' (vs. 58:2; Jer 29:13-14, Hos 3:5, Amos 5:4,6,14)
  - requirements to accept the gift: 'seek' and 'call'
    - vs. moving away from Him; vs. waiting until later- or never
  - implies He can be found; implies that a later time may not be possible (thru hardening or death-- 6:9-13a; Lk 16:19-31); implies relationship vs. ritual (Lk 13:24-30)
- 7a's repentance from one's 'way' and 'thoughts' (Ps 2:12)- and 'turn to the Lord'
  - 7b's promise of mercy- 'he will freely pardon'
- > post-ch. 53, Motyer's 'Wickedness, objectively considered, has been dealt with by the Servant's death; wickedness, subjectively considered, calls for repentance...[here] emphasizing the response which brings those benefits into personal experience.'

## 55:8-13

- 8-9's motivation I: 8's 'my thoughts/ways are not your ways'- 9's higher to the magnitude that 'the heavens are higher than the earth'
  - applied to 7's mercy (vs. fear that grace is too good to be true or that God will renege if we fail)

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<sup>42</sup> Motyer argues that Ps 89 is key here.

-10-11's motivation II: 11's 'my word...will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it' (40:8, 46:10-11; Gen 1, Ps 107:20, Jn 1:1, Heb 4:12)

-refers specifically to God's promises wrt the Servant<sup>43</sup> (49:4 vs. 53:11), but in general as well!

-10's analogy: as the rain/snow 'come down from heaven', water the earth, and cause 'bud and flourish'– *to make it fruitful*-- yielding 'seed for the sower' and 'bread for the eater' (Ps 104:13-15)

-God's word will bear fruit– although sometimes bitter; MH's 'If it does not convince the conscience and soften the heart, it will sear the conscience and harden the heart; if it does not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell.' (6:9-13a)

-> 8-11 as the power of God within history and nature (revisited)

-12-13's praise:

-12a's 'go out in joy' (35:10, 52:9) and 'led forth in peace'

-12b's 'mountains/hills will burst into song (44:23)...trees will clap their hands/branches' (I Chron 16:33, Ps 98:8a, 114:3-6, Mal 4:2)

-13a's pine tree and myrtle vs. thorn bush and briers (vs. 5:6; 35:1-2, 41:19; vs. Gen 3:17-19)

-13b's 'for the Lord's renown...an everlasting sign'

-> as a picture of kingdom-life and the efficacy of the Church vs. the Millennium

-> GCM's 'Opening with a description of life as thirsty, hungry, unsatisfied– and so not life in the true sense at all; [the chapter] closes with a picture of life in the midst of the garden of rest and fruitfulness.'

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<sup>43</sup> Motyer's This brings 'to a conclusion the whole panorama which opened at 40:1...the need of the Gentile world alongside that of Zion and the vocation of the Servant of the Lord to perform the double task of bringing divine truth to the Gentiles and restoring the survivors of Israel.'

## Isaiah 53

### Intro

- chs. 40-44 on Israel-- its idolatry/rebellion and its failure as God's 'servant'—with brief cameos by Babylon, Cyrus, and the Messiah
- chs. 45-48's Cyrus the 'servant'—dealing with Israel's political problem, but...
- chs. 49-55's Superior Servant—dealing with Israel's spiritual problem, leading a true/faithful 'Israel' (the people of God)

### 52:13-53:12 (read in total)

- > the fourth/final and longest Servant Song<sup>44</sup> (followed my Motyer's 'the great double tailpiece attached to it' in chs. 54-55)...
- central- in topic and location-- to both sections chs. 49-55 and chs. 40-66
- a prophetic description of Christ's death and an interpretation of its meaning
  - focuses on His suffering (developing 49:4,7, 50:6's brief refs)-- and explains how it will lead to His exaltation and the redemption of both Israel and the world (Jn 11:49-52, I Jn 2:2)
- before Christ, understood by Jews to be messianic (but still usually in a political/military context overall); afterwards, reinterpreted as the suffering of Israel the nation- or its faithful remnant-- as God's servant
  - former contradicts Isaiah's point that Israel's suffering is a function of its own sin
  - latter as an improvement, but even the faithful need to be redeemed from their sin
  - contrary to any 'reasonable' expectation of how God would move (55:8-9; see also: Cyrus; w/ app.)
- considered by Christ (Lk 24:25-27) and NT writers to be Messianic (quoted in Mt 8:17, Jn 12:38, Rom 10:16, 15:21, I Pet 2:22; see also: Heb 9:28, I Pet 1:11, 2:21-25, Rev 5:6)
  - often called the gospel in the OT; MH's 'This chapter is so replenished with the unsearchable riches of Christ that it may be called rather the gospel of the evangelist Isaiah than the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah.'

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<sup>44</sup> Motyer notes that the five stanzas of the poem are of slowly and steadily increasing length- 'matching the mood of mounting excitement in the poem itself'.

## 52:13-53:1<sup>45</sup>

- 13a's 'my servant will act wisely'– MH's 'commissioned & qualified'
  - flip side: 13b's 'he will be raised/lifted up/highly exalted' (6:1's God/throne, 33:10, 57:15; Jer 23:5; Eph 1:20-23, Phil 2:9-11)
    - threefold combo as resurrection, ascension, and glorification in Heaven
- 14's '*many* who were appalled at him', incl. 'appearance...so disfigured/marred'
  - in combo with 13, describes the contrast in perceptions of His ministry
  - latter alludes to suffering
  - 'marred' used to indicate inappropriate sacrificial animals (Mal 1:14)—vs. perfect sacrifice and perfect high priest
  - vs. 15a's 'so will he sprinkle *many* nations'<sup>46</sup> (Dt 32:2, Heb 10:22's 'having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience')
    - a ref to sacrifice for cleansing (Lev 14:7, 16:19, Num 8:7) or consecration (Ex 29:21, Lev 8:11,30)
    - vs. alt. trans. in LXX: 'so will many nations marvel at him' (52:15b)
- 14,15's 'many' as a key phrase in this passage (53:11b,12a's 'great', 12c), denoting those who the Servant has worked for– and in contrast to the one Servant
- 15b's 'kings will shut their mouths'<sup>47</sup>– apparently, in astonishment at both his suffering and exaltation (49:7)
  - 15c's not told, but will see; not heard, but will understand (6:9-10; quoted in Rom 15:21)– hadn't heard or paid attention previously, but would be obvious
    - > more generally, 1's 'who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?' (51:9, 52:10; Dt 7:18-19; quoted in Jn 12:38, Rom 10:16)
      - 15's shock post-ignorance vs. 1's divine revelation
      - Isaiah and the future faithful remnant lamenting the tepid response to the 'gospel'; why so much trouble accepting it?...

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<sup>45</sup> 13a's 'behold' makes links with 42:1, 51:1, and 52:6.

<sup>46</sup> Motyer discusses the difficulties in translating 52:14-15 (p. 425).

<sup>47</sup> Motyer argues to omit NIV's 'and'.

### 53:2-3's life and ministry

- 2a's 'grew up before him [God] like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground'
  - results in both fruit and root (4:2, 6:13, 11:1,10)
  - earthy language-- alludes to family trees, seemingly natural and unimpressive origins (Mt 13:55's 'Isn't this the carpenter's son?'; Jn 7:41's 'How can the Christ come from Galilee?'; Joseph as a poor carpenter)
  - implies a degree of frailty, weed vs. something cultivated
    - > in 1's context, natural Q: how can He be 'the arm of the Lord'?
    - 'dry ground'- Mary as a virgin &/or not exactly fertile soil within his nation (in rebellion from God); see also: thirst within the nation and possibly alluding to the temptation in the desert
  - 'before God'
    - implies not before men- not noticed
    - distinct from God (seeming paradox that God would be before God)
- 2b's 'no beauty or majesty' (vs. Acts 7:20, Heb 11:23 for Moses; I Sam 16:12,18 for David)- so that people would be attracted to him in general and as a political messiah (esp. as a 'son of David')
  - > what would one expect a human-deity to look and be like?!
  - in any case, an explanation not an excuse- underestimated and unattractive if doesn't fit one's agenda, both then & now
- 3's 'a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering'
  - 'sorrows' implies mental and physical pain
  - stemmed from frustrations of and persecution within his ministry- and from 4,10's bearing our sorrows
  - > very odd for a God-sent deity/messiah
- > 3's 'despised' \* 2 (49:7; Ps 22:6-8), 'rejected by men' (then and now); 'we esteemed him not'
  - ironic given one would expect him to have a large following—given his ministry
  - latter as an accounting term- trying to ascribe objective value
    - Motyer's 'When all that the human eye saw and the human mind apprehended was added up, the result was zero.'
    - ironic if lit.; if fig., not honoring commensurate with His true worth (Jn 1:10-11)

### 53:4-6's heart of the poem

- > the fullest revelation of the Messiah's mission and purpose
  - divine, given general human inability to comprehend (52:15b, 55:8-9's 'thoughts/ways')
- 4a's 'he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows' (I Pet 2:24)
  - quoted in Mt 8:17 wrt Jesus' healing ministry
  - can certainly refer to physical and emotional, but greater app. to spiritual (see: 5,8's transgressions, 5,6,11's iniquities, 9's wicked, 12's sin, 12's transgressors \* 2)
- 4b's 'we considered (same as 3's 'esteemed'!) him stricken<sup>48</sup>/smitten/afflicted by God'
  - beyond merely not protected by God, Israel thought he was cursed by God given His 'sins', incl. blasphemy (see: obedience/blessings formula)
- 5a's 'he was pierced (51:9; Ps 22:16, Zech 12:10, Jn 19:34) for our transgressions...crushed (Lam 3:34) for our iniquities' (Dan 9:24, Acts 2:23, Rom 4:25)
  - on 'pierced...', MH's 'Our sins were the thorns in his head, the nails in his hands and feet, the spear in his side.'
  - 'crushed' implies the weight and bulk of the sin
- 5b's 'the punishment that brought us peace (54:10's 'covenant of peace'; vs. 48:18,22; Col 1:20's made 'peace thru his blood...to reconcile to himself all things') was upon him and by his wounds [KJV's stripes] we are healed' (30:26; I Pet 2:24)
  - again, spiritual more than physical
  - Christ deals with all of our spiritual needs- 4's 'carried our sorrows', 5a's dealt with our alienation from God, 5b's brings us healing and peace

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<sup>48</sup> Used 60x in Lev 13-14 to describe the 'blow' of the leprosy. See also: I Kings 8:37-38, Ps 73:14.

-irony that their war against Him led to our peace (shalom)- and that His wounds led to our healing

-MH's 'Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls and which Christ provided for the cure of.'

-6b's 'The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all'

-God's plan in a nutshell (Jn 3:16)

-Motyer's 'The human eye (vs. 4) saw the Servant at the mercy of hostile, even divine forces; the theologically instructed eye (vs. 6) saw the hand of the Lord fulfilling the Servant's death as a sin-bearing exercise.'

-language reminiscent of the scape-goat (Lev 16:20-21a)

-see also: Heb's Christ as the perfect priest offering the perfect sacrifice

-why/how Israel could have (partially) understood this-- but LAB's 'it is one thing to kill a lamb, and something quite different to think of God's chosen servant as that Lamb.'

-> 6a's 'we all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way' (Ps 119:176, Jer 50:6, Ez 34:1-6,17-24, Rom 3:23, I Pet 2:25a)

-vs. the Servant sticking to God's will despite the difficulty (50:6-7)

-'all' as common culpability; 'each' as indiv. responsibility

-going one's 'own way' (vs. God's) as the essence of sin

-MH's 'We have gone astray like sheep, which are apt to wonder, and are unapt, when they have gone astray, to find the way home again.'; Motyer's 'the Bible stresses the peril of sheep without a shepherd'

-> Christ as the Great Shepherd (Ez 34:7-16,25-31, Jn 10:11-16, I Pet 2:25b)

-> strength and distinctiveness of three sets of pronouns-- for us, God, Christ (e.g., 4b's 'yet we'); Motyer's 'While he deals with our moral and spiritual needs and our broken personhood, we are not even mentioned except as contributors of the sin which caused his pain...The servant suffers in isolation from humanity and in distinction from the Lord; he suffers under our sin and under the Lord's hand.'

-> note the passive nature of many verbs in this passage (II Cor 5:21)-- but 7-9's borne voluntarily...

### **53:7-9's death and ministry<sup>49</sup>**

-> 7-8's read and explained to the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip (Acts 8:32-39)

-7's 'oppressed and afflicted'-- 'led like a lamb to the slaughter' (Ps 44:22, Jn 1:29,36, Rev 5:6)-- 'yet he did not open his mouth' (Mt 26:62-63a, 27:12-14, Mk 14:60-61a, 15:4-5, Lk 23:9, Jn 19:8-11, I Pet 2:23)

-in context, as the Lamb, the Servant pays the price that we deserve for 6's sheep having 'gone astray'

-from God's plan for salvation to the Servant's willingness to pay the price (53:12b)

-Motyer's 'Animals go uncomprehendingly to slaughter as to shearing; the Servant who knew well, went to his death with a calmness reflecting not an ignorant but a submitted mind. What for them is the nature of the beast was

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<sup>49</sup> Motyer notes that the three sections here have 5,4, and 3 lines, 'giving a tailing off effect as the Servant is brought to the grave'.

for him a thought-out, voluntary course.'

-underlines the inadequacy of the OT sacrificial system (and at an early date); Motyer's 'somewhere between the profoundly real experience of 6:7 and the vision of the substitutionary role of the Servant [here], the awareness dawned that (as Heb 10:4 puts it) the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins...In a word, the fatal flaw in existing substitutionary procedures was exposed and met in one stroke. For the point where animal substitution failed was also the point where sin is most serious. Sin as failure (vs. 12's 'hata') need be no more than a pity; sin as moral defect (vs. 5's 'awon') is distressing but leaves it arguable that what cannot be helped cannot be blameworthy; but sin as willfulness (vs. 5's 'pasa') is the thing that God cannot overlook...Because of this, no animal can do more than picture substitution; only a person can substitute for a person; only a consenting will can substitute for a rebellious will.' (I Pet 2:24, I Jn 3:5)

-8's 'taken away', no descendants<sup>50</sup> [considered a tragedy in that time], 'cut off from the land of the living'

-by 'oppression and judgment' [see: his unfair trial]-- but 'stricken' (53:4) for the sin of the people

-9's 'assigned a grave with the wicked' and the rich-- though he had not been violent or deceitful (quoted in I Pet 2:22)

-'no violence'-- in the face of his enemies' incredible malice and violence

-'deceit' revisits Isaiah's emphasis on sins of speech (3:8, 6:5, 32:4, 35:6, 57:14)--

again, underlining the Servant's perfection and ability to substitute for sinners

-'the wicked' and 'the rich'

-an odd combo in that setting (given OC)-- or a natural combo (given frequent oppression) used ironically here

-'the wicked' as lit. 'the wicked ones' (plural); 'the rich' as lit. 'a rich one' (singular); Motyer's 'He seems to be saying that in the burial of the Servant, wicked people and a rich man were somehow involved.' (!)

→ a third seeming paradox for this section: 52:13-15's how could such suffering lead to such exaltation; 53:1-3's how could a seemingly plain human be 'the arm of the Lord'; here, 'how can a disgraced and condemned man receive a rich man's burial?'<sup>51</sup>

→ Christ crucified between two thieves and would have been buried

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<sup>50</sup> Motyer criticizes the NIV here.

<sup>51</sup> Motyer notes those who try to explain these away, but humorously observes that 'understandably, neither offers reasons for these assertions.'

in a common grave– except for Mt 27:57-60's Joseph of Arimathea  
-Motyer's 'Like the other enigmas of this Song, this too is written so that when the turn of events provides the explanation, we shall know for certain that we stand in the presence of the Servant of the Lord.'  
-see: need for veiled prophecy in general

### **53:10-12's conclusion**<sup>52</sup>

→ in light of 4-6's mission and purpose; justly resolving 7-9's undeserved pain and suffering; and in general, wrapping up earlier themes in the Song<sup>53</sup> ...

1.) description of his ministry in life/death:

-10a's 'yet it was the Lord's will (or delight!; 44:28's 'Cyrus...will accomplish all that I please') to crush him and cause him to suffer' (Ps 22:1-2,15b, Zech 13:7, Jn 18:11, Rom 8:32)

-10b's 'though the Lord<sup>54</sup> makes his life a guilt offering...' (Lev 5:14-6:7, Mt 20:28's 'to give his life as a ransom for many')

-Motyer notes that Isaiah seems to purposefully avoid the typical 'to bring' an offering. 'The Lord is not bringing the sacrifice, for it is being made to him. (He is providing, but not bringing.) The Servant is not bringing the sacrifice for he is the sacrifice. We are not bringing the sacrifice but coming to that which has been provided on our behalf. Was it for this reason that Isaiah found a different word...? This would seem to be the case.'

-11a's 'after the suffering of his soul...'

-12b's 'because he poured out his life unto death (Ps 22:14-15a) and was numbered with the transgressors' (Mk 15:27-28; quoted in Lk 22:37)

-latter as a powerful phrase; criminals (revisited), but more broadly: Christ as mediator/bridge (Phil 2:5-7); Motyer's 'Here the Servant comes voluntarily to stand with us so that when he had borne our sin he might bring us to God.'

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<sup>52</sup> Motyer talks about dividing this section into two and three parts (p. 437).

<sup>53</sup> See: Motyer, p. 436-437 for details.

<sup>54</sup> Motyer: '*The Lord* is an interpretative addition which may or may not be correct.' Can be translated 'When his soul makes'– referring to Christ's willing sacrifice. If so, matches the Lord's will (10a) and 50:7's 'set his face' with 'sets his soul' here.

-12c's 'bore the sins of *many* (not all) and made intercession for [them]' (Jn 1:29, Rom 8:34, Heb 7:25)

2.) outcome/result of his death and resurrection:

-10c's 'he will see his offspring and prolong his days' (9:7)

-on 'offspring'...

-spiritual descendants vs. 8's physical- answers 49:21's Q and discussed further in ch. 54 (lit. 'seed'; Ps 22:30-31, Jn 12:24)

-Motyer's 'We stray as 6's sheep; we return as children.' (Jn 1:12)

-on 'and prolong his days', Motyer argues to omit 'and'- and notes that this phrase always describes earthly life (except perhaps Ps 23:6); thus, meant to express a life terminated on earth which still has immense effect (w/ app.)

-vs. 29:22-23's Jacob who sees his children- but only as a spectator

-vs. 14:9-17's impotence in Sheol of those who were powerful on earth; Motyer's '[For the Servant] This is no half-life in Sheol, but magisterial executive authority...Death has dethroned [the kings]. In the case of the Servant, however, death ushers him into sovereign dignity and power.'

-10d's 'the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand' (44:28; Jn 6:37-40, 10:28)

-11b's 'he will see the light of life (resurrection) and be satisfied' (Ps 22:23-24,26)

- 'satisfied' implies completion; GCM is blown away by this phrase- not just saving us, but bringing Him such satisfaction

-11c's 'by his knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many, and...bear their iniquities' (11:2; Dan 9:24, Rom 5:18-19)

-His righteousness (vs. ours) will justify- provide righteousness for us and make us right with God

-the negative (removal of sin) is accompanied by the positive (ability to have relationship with God)

-> all this as Motyer's 'one of the fullest statements of atonement theology ever penned'

-12a's will be given 'a portion among the great...divide the spoils with the strong'- as if He were a conquering king (Ps 2, 22:27-29)

-Motyer argues that the NIV is inaccurate here- and anti-climactic; instead,

'I will allocate to him the many, and the strong he will allocate as spoil'

- 'the many' as C's (revisited; Jn 6:37-40); 'the strong' as defeated enemies (Mt 12:29's 'tie up the strong man')

-> resolves 52:14-15's enigma

→ but note again the op for confusion here about the Messiah's mission!

-> GCM's 'In this great chapter, we are [told about] the mystery of the suffering of the

Servant of God, in a way which can only make the lips dumb, and bow the soul to the most complete prostration of wonder and amazement. So great is the revelation that pity is impertinent and sympathy is irreverent. We can only watch, and wonder, and adore, as we see Him— of men, despised and rejected; of God, bruised and put to grief; in Himself, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; at last, cut off out of the world of the living, His grave with the wicked. And all this because, “All we like sheep have gone astray...and Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” With...complete abasement and shame, I am constrained to say: Was it worthwhile?...Am I worth it? The answer is in these words: 11's “He...shall be satisfied.” Then I have but one thing to say, and it is this: Love so amazing, so Divine; demands my life, my soul, my all.’