

Isaiah 48: 1 – 22

In The Furnace of Affliction

1 “Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah; Who swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness; **2** For they call themselves after the holy city, and lean on the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is His name: **3** “I have declared the former things from the beginning; They went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. **4** Because I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck was an iron sinew, and your brow bronze, **5** Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, lest you should say, ‘My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.’ **6** “You have heard; See all this. And will you not declare it? I have made you hear new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them. **7** They are created now and not from the beginning; And before this day you have not heard them, lest you should say, ‘Of course I knew them.’ **8** Surely you did not hear, surely you did not know; Surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb. **9** “For My name’s sake I will defer My anger, and for My praise I will restrain it from you, so that I do not cut you off. **10** Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. **11** For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another. **12** “Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. **13** Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand up together. **14** “All of you, assemble yourselves, and hear! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; He shall do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be against the Chaldeans. **15** I, even I, have spoken; Yes, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way will prosper. **16** “Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit Have sent Me.” **17** Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go. **18** Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. **19** Your descendants also would have been like the sand, and the offspring of your body like the grains of sand; His name would not have been cut off nor destroyed from before Me.” **20** Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! With a voice of singing, declare, proclaim this, utter it to the end of the earth; Say, “The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob!” **21** And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He caused the waters to flow from the rock for them; He also split the rock, and the waters gushed out. **22** “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”

The other day as I left church I saw a bumper sticker that read, ‘Christian – not different – just forgiven!’ There is some amazing truth in that short statement. You see we are no different than

non-believers. In fact I have met some pretty nice people who have no faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Sadly, being nice will not get anyone to heaven. It is faith in the finished work of the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that ultimately matters.

In the past chapters we have learned that Babylon, and its final fate, has just been described, but the very idea has turned Isaiah's attention on Israel. It has put Israel under the microscope. Is Israel so much better than other countries just like are we better than others? No, they are not. The only difference is that God has a purpose for Israel, just as He has a purpose for you and me.

I want to show you a quick inventory of God's review of the Israelites. In all honesty see if any of these charges hit home. I will be the first to raise my hand and say – Guilty as charged!' How about you?

1. Full of self pity and self-justification – chapter 40 verse 27, “Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?”
2. deaf and blind and unresponsive – chapter 42 verses 18-25, “I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. And I will bring the blind by a way [that] they knew not; I will lead them in paths [that] they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye [are] our gods. Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who [is] blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger [that] I sent? who [is] blind as [he that is] perfect, and blind as the LORD'S servant? Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not. The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make [it] honourable. But this [is] a people robbed and spoiled; [they are] all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this? [who] will hearken and hear for the time to come? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid [it] not to heart.”
3. Culpable – chapter 43 verse 8, “Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.”
4. Weary of God and not giving Him due honor while failing to honor the covenant – chapter 43 verses 22-28, “But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities I, [even] I, [am] he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned,

and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

5. They are transgressors – chapter 46 verse 8, “Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring [it] again to mind, O ye transgressors.”
6. Stubborn and far from righteousness – chapter 46 verse 12, “Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that [are] far from righteousness”
7. They are miserably sick – chapter 1 verses 5-9, “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head [there is] no soundness in it; [but] wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country [is] desolate, your cities [are] burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and [it is] desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, [and] we should have been like unto Gomorrah.
8. They are a people of unclean lips and hearts – chapter 6 verse 5, “Then said I, Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”

Well, how did you score out of these questions? By the way, it isn't the most ones right that count – only a score of '0' counts. Wow!

1 “Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah; Who swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness; 2 For they call themselves after the holy city, and lean on the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is His name:

God now calls through Isaiah to His sinful people as Jacob/Israel. They are of the house of Jacob, and they are called by the name of Israel. Their credentials are good. And they have come from the waters of Judah. ‘The waters’ may refer to the waters that break in a woman prior to birth.

He begins by describing their condition, ‘not in truth or in righteousness’. They are not only called by the name of Israel, but they swear by the name of Yahweh. When they bind themselves with an oath they still do it in Yahweh’s name. All this is not in truth or in righteousness. It is not a genuine response, nor does it produce obedience to the covenant. In real terms it is pretence. Even as they call themselves of the holy city and stay themselves on the God of Israel they are not being genuine. They are not holy. They are not really resting in Him. It is not in truth or in righteousness. In reality they have turned from Yahweh and His ways. Here was irony indeed. They boasted that they were the holy city, and they were anything but holy.

3 “I have declared the former things from the beginning; They went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. 4 Because I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck was an iron sinew, and your brow bronze, 5 Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you,

lest you should say, ‘My idol has done them, and my carved image and my molded image have commanded them.’

God now tells them why He always tells them and shows them clearly what He is about to do before He does things, and then does them suddenly. It is so that they will not be able to say, ‘My idol has done it’. For He knows that they are obstinate, and that their neck is of iron, totally unbending, and their brow is of bronze, firm and unyielding, so that given half a chance they will credit it to their idols and their images. The graven image is one of wood; the molten image is one of wood plated in precious metal.

6 “You have heard; See all this. And will you not declare it? I have made you hear new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them. 7 They are created now and not from the beginning; And before this day you have not heard them, lest you should say, ‘Of course I knew them.’

Now take a look at this. Here we see what we and what they should be doing as His witnesses. God challenges them as to why they do not declare what they have heard about Him from the past. Why do they not give Him the honor due to Him and reveal it to the world?

Let me ask you a painful question, ‘when was the last time you told someone about how God has saved you and blessed you? If you haven’t for some time I pray that this becomes part of your new daily prayer for Him to arrange situations for you to begin to do so. Do I hear an Amen?

8 Surely you did not hear, surely you did not know; Surely from long ago your ear was not opened. For I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb.

He has just previously told them that they had heard and known about what He had declared and done, but now He admits that they had not really heard, they had not really known. Their ears are heavy and their eyes are closed. They have not allowed it to come home to them. And this is because they are so treacherous, because they are transgressors even from birth.

Now we need to stop and understand a certain word. The word for ‘treacherous’ means a couple of things that will sting.

1. 1 Samuel 14.33 - to do something contrary to the covenant, “Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.”
2. Job 6.14-15 - it is used of a friend who fails in friendship, “To him that is afflicted pity [should be shewed] from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty. My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, [and] as the stream of brooks they pass away”
3. Jeremiah 12.6 - and of family disloyalty, “For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.”
4. Isaiah 33.1 - and it signifies a failure to honor one’s word, “Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou [wast] not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously

with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; [and] when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.”

All these were true of Israel. To be a transgressor from birth indicates that they have been set in sin and disobedience right from a young age. They were ‘born like it’.

9 “For My name’s sake I will defer My anger, and for My praise I will restrain it from you, so that I do not cut you off. 10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. 11 For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another.

Have you ever wondered why your life is filled with so many problems? Try these verses on for size.

God will not allow His purposes to be frustrated. Somehow He will yet produce from them and from us a righteous servant. Let them not think that God is not aware of what we are and what we do. It is for His own name’s sake that He defers His anger, not punishing them and us as we deserve. It is so that He will finally receive the praise due to Him that He refrains from cutting them off, although it is something which is for their benefit too.

Please note His way of refining. He will refine them, not as silver is refined in fire, but in the furnace of affliction.

12 “Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. 13 Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand up together.

Have you ever thought that God cannot help you in certain situations? I think we all have fought this sinful thinking. We need to stop and reflect on exactly Who our God really Is! He Is the One Who Is, The First and The Last. He Is prior to all things both in time and being, He sums up all things and will bring them to conclusion. Because He Is The First, He has initiated all things. Because He Is The Last, He brings them to their proper conclusion. He Is over all history from beginning to end. Our God Is Magnificent. He Is Glorious. He Is Awesome! Bless Your Holy Name Jehovah Elohim.

14 “All of you, assemble yourselves, and hear! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; He shall do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be against the Chaldeans. 15 I, even I, have spoken; Yes, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way will prosper.

Israel are called on to assemble themselves together to listen, all of them. Our Great Adoni Yahweh, Father God is here expressing His love for His true prophet, our Lord Jesus Christ even as He did when our Lord was baptized. Looking and knowing the future, He had chosen him and called him to his difficult task and He had proved faithful.

16 “Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit Have sent Me.” 17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go

Sit still now and realize the gift that you have just been given. For our Great and Holy El Shaddai – Almighty God – Is giving us a sneak peek into His Holy of Holies. We are allowed to see The Blessed Holy Trinity, One God – Three Divine Holy Ones. God Is One yet He Is Three Holy Ones- totally equal and One. Amazing! Our Lord Jesus Comments how His Two Equal Holy Ones, The Father and The Holy Spirit send Him to be our Redeemer. Thank you O Holy Sovereign Lord.

18 Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. 19 Your descendants also would have been like the sand, and the offspring of your body like the grains of sand; His name would not have been cut off nor destroyed from before Me.”

Not all those who thought of themselves as Israel would be redeemed even in the wildest dreams of the Jews. Isaiah knew full well that many were lost among the nations by choice, that many had sinned grievously and had died, that many still stood firm against Him and clung to idols, and did not want to respond to Him under any circumstances, and would not. They would refuse any call. They would not be redeemed. So it is a plea to all physical Israel from their potential Redeemer. They had the opportunity as the sons of Abraham to respond if they willed it. It came from One Who wanted to be their Redeemer, and Who would be the Redeemer of those whom He had chosen, who would be revealed in the fact that they responded.

For we should note that He was also the Holy One of Israel. Should they desire redemption they must be willing to be made holy, acceptable to Him and set apart in righteousness as He is righteous. God cannot redeem without making holy. It is part of the essence of His redemption.

He introduces Himself as their God Who teaches them what is profitable for them, what is truly best for them. He is the One Who has sought to lead them in the way that they should go, especially through His Torah (His Law, His Instruction). And He expresses His yearning, His longing that they might have kept His commandments. If only they had walked in His ways, then they would have had peace, flowing smoothly like a river, and their righteousness would have been as the waves of the sea lapping gently against the shore, continuing peacefully on and on. What is more they would have grown into a large nation, their children as abundant as grains of sand, just as God had promised Abraham.

20 Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! With a voice of singing, declare, proclaim this, utter it to the end of the earth; Say, “The LORD has redeemed His servant Jacob!” 21 And they did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He caused the waters to flow from the rock for them; He also split the rock, and the waters gushed out. 22 “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”

These verses depict what all men everywhere must do. They must 'flee from Babylon', what it signifies and the hold that Babylonian licentiousness and belief in the occult has on them. Wherever they are they must flee from their sources of wealth that hold them back, they must flee from their comfortable living, they must flee from their compromises. For that apocalyptic moment when final judgment comes on Babylon is approaching and all who are His people must flee from the very idea of it as we read in the book of Revelation chapter 18 verse 4, "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

The picture presented is thus precisely that of one looking far ahead and seeing an apocalyptic event taking place without actually having firsthand knowledge of it. It is true that what mattered to him was the completing of the Servant for his worldwide task but that was secondary. Primary was for all men to escape is from satanic Babylon, the great enemy of God.

The fact that our Great Yahweh had done all the great work for the Israelites when they were wandering in the Sinai desert, so Yahweh would deliver them as He had His own from Egypt.

But for the wicked there is no peace, under any circumstances. This comment sums up the whole section from 40-48. With all the glorious truths and promises that had been revealed and given, the hearts of the majority of Israel were still not at peace. This was what chapter 48 has emphasized. The people are not at peace (verse 18). And now Yahweh sums up why. Even with the worldwide exiles returning there is no peace to the wicked. Total reformation will be needed if they are to find peace. But who is there who can bring it about? The answer lies in the chapters that follow as he describes the One Who will come to bring peace, the Prince of Peace our Lord, Master, King, and Savior Jesus Christ.