

Isaiah 51

We must remember that we are dealing with the section of Isaiah (49:1-57:21) that relates to the phrase from Isaiah 40:2, *“That her iniquity has been removed”* (you may want to read the notes associated with Isaiah 40:2). This *iniquity* will be *removed* through the death of the Servant of Jehovah, whom we know to be Jesus. Isaiah 51:1-52:12 deviates from the subject of the Servant’s sufferings and death addressed in the majority of chapter 50, the last three verses of chapter 52, and basically all of chapter 53. In fact, the majority of Isaiah 51 and 52 contains not only good news for the believing remnant of the Jews from Isaiah’s day forward (with a special emphasis on the believing remnant alive at the end of the Tribulation), but good news for the Jerusalem of the Messianic Kingdom as well. This means that any Jew living between Isaiah’s day and the Second Coming of Christ can be comforted by these words—even the Jews who would live in Babylon during the seventy years of captivity. These verses confirm, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that nothing can exterminate the Jewish nation, not even the Babylonian captivity, not even Haman in the book of Esther, not even the Holocaust, not even 911 and all the ramifications of that hideous day. If God has promised that a remnant of spiritually redeemed Jews will be alive at the end of the Tribulation, then nothing, absolutely nothing can cause the Jews to cease to exist as a nation and miss out on the blessings of the Millennium. It will be the *arm of the Lord* (Isaiah 51:5, 9; 52:10), the second Person of the Trinity that we know to be Jesus Christ, who sees to it that this believing remnant is protected. What comforting words for any physical descendant of Abraham who has a passion for Jehovah!

Is. 51:1 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, Who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the quarry from which you were dug.

The phrases, *“you who pursue righteousness,”* and, *“Who seek the Lord,”* confirm that it is the believing remnant of the Jewish nation that Jehovah addresses in verses 1-8. Tying verse 2 in with verse 1, we discover that *“the rock”* is Abraham while *“the quarry”* is Sarah; and their union set in motion the multiplication of the population of the Hebrew people.

Is. 51:2 “Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him.”

Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, and Sarah, his wife, brought forth Isaac through much pain. After all, Sarah was barren for several years before Isaac was born. The believing

remnant of the Jews should be encouraged in that Jehovah *blessed* as well as *multiplied* Abraham's offspring when *Abraham was* but *one—one* person, the *one* and only Jew (to be more specific, the *one* and only Hebrew). The message here is that the God who previously *multiplied...Abraham* will one day greatly multiply the believing remnant of the Jews. This fact will serve to encourage every spiritually regenerated Jew from Isaiah's day onward, even those involved in the Babylonian captivity (like Daniel, for instance); for it confirms that the nation's history of disobedience, as well as her initial rejection of the Messiah, will not prevent future blessings, blessings that will one day include an enormous increase in the Jewish population. This population explosion will occur during the Millennium (read Jeremiah 23:3), after every Jew on the earth at the end of the Tribulation has accepted Jesus as Messiah (Romans 11:26). Therefore, the believing Jews of today, even though small in number, can be significantly comforted during those times when it seems as though a future, greatly blessed and greatly multiplied Israel, is totally out of the question.

Is. 51:3 Indeed, the Lord will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.

The *waste places* of Zion (the *waste places* within the *land* promised to the Jews in Genesis 15:18) will be restored (the notes associated with Isaiah 52:9 tie in well here). The argument is clear considering the content of verses 1-2. If Jehovah could multiply the nation from such small beginnings, He also possesses the capability of rebuilding the ruins of the Jewish homeland to exceed its former splendor and magnificence. This will occur when Christ reigns during the Millennium. The believing remnant of the Jews from Isaiah's day onward should take much comfort in these words; for the Millennium will be a time when *Joy and gladness... , Thanksgiving and sound of a melody* will characterize the land. Can we even begin to imagine the degree of excitement these verses will generate within the believing remnant of the Jews at the end of the Tribulation?

Is. 51:4 ¶ "Pay attention to Me, O My people; And give ear to Me, O My nation; For a law will go forth from Me, And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples.

Isaiah again encourages the believing remnant of the Hebrew *people* (note the phrases, "*O My people,*" and, "*O My nation*") by addressing conditions that will exist during the Millennium. The word "*peoples*" in the last phrase of this verse points to the Gentiles, not the Jews. We know that during the Millennium, the Gentiles will come to Jerusalem for the purpose of receiving counsel from Jesus. Therefore, the phrase, "*For a law will go forth from Me,*" points to the same *law* addressed in Isaiah 2:2-4, the *law*, or instruction, that *will go forth* from Jerusalem to *the peoples* (Gentiles) from the Messiah. Therefore, this *law* is not the Mosaic Law, but rather the instruction from the Messiah that will cause the Millennium to function as smoothly and efficiently as possible. The Messiah will display His *justice* by making decisions that will serve as *a light of the peoples*, in other words, serve to *light* the path of the Gentile nations. One of Jesus' requirements will be that they annually observe *the Feast of Booths* (also known as the Feast of Tabernacles) in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:16). In fact, *rain* will be withheld from any Gentile nation that refuses to comply (Zechariah 14:17). Such laws will have nothing to do with bringing spiritual regeneration to any offspring of the believing Gentiles during the Millennium, for they will serve basically as a reminder (much like communion today) of what Christ has already accomplished. By the way, *the Feast of Booths* has always pointed to the Messianic Kingdom (Leviticus 23:33-44; Matthew 17:1-4; Matthew 21:1-9) just as the *Passover* has pointed to Christ's crucifixion (1Corinthians 5:7). If you have a copy of *The Gospels From a Jewish Perspective* materials published by this ministry, you should read what is recorded concerning

these two Feasts. It is amazing how Jesus fulfilled the seven major Feasts (Festivals) mentioned in Leviticus 23.

Jehovah's basic message of Isaiah 51:4 is clear. The fact that the Gentiles will receive instruction from the Messiah during the Millennium confirms that the Millennium will actually occur. If the Millennium occurs, then the national regeneration of the Jewish remnant is sure to transpire. This makes Christ's Second Coming certain as well, for He must return to save the believing remnant of the Jewish nation before the Millennium can begin. What a faithful, wise, and powerful God we serve. A quick read of the notes associated with Isaiah 49:6 might be helpful at this time.

Is. 51:5 "My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, And My arms will judge the peoples; The coastlands will wait for Me, And for My arm they will wait expectantly.

From verses such as Isaiah 49:6, we understand that Jehovah's *salvation* is offered to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles alike. In Isaiah 51:5, we find that *righteousness* accompanies *salvation*, *righteousness* meaning to be right with God. However, one must repent and accept the "*seed*" of Genesis 3:15, who *is Christ* the Messiah (Galatians 3:16), in order to obtain this *salvation* and the resulting *righteousness*. Consider the following concerning God's past and present dealings with mankind.

During Old Testament times, any Jew or Gentile who received salvation (through faith in the *seed* of Genesis 3:15—that we know to be Jesus Christ) was "declared" righteous because Jesus had not yet been crucified (also refer to notes on Isaiah 1:15). The Church age began in Acts 2 and will continue until the church is taken off the earth by means of the Rapture. Believers during the Church age, the majority of which have been, and will continue to be Gentiles, have the awesome privilege of being "made" righteous the moment they accept Christ. This is because Christ's crucifixion occurred before they became believers. Not so during Old Testament times, for Jesus' death was yet future. It was for this reason that Old Testament believers were only declared righteous (saved on credit) until Jesus could die (Romans 3:25), their soul and spirit going to *Abraham's bosom* at the point of physical death (Luke 16:19-31). In conjunction with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, Old Testament believers were *made perfect* (Hebrews 12:23). They were also taken out of Abraham's bosom to heaven at Christ's ascension (Ephesians 4:8). However, all who are saved during the Church age are made as righteous (right) as Jesus is righteous (right) with the Father the very moment they accept Christ as Savior (read 2Corinthians 5:21). What great news! The Romans course distributed by this ministry gives much more input concerning this wonderful truth.

A distinction is made between "*arms*" and "*arm*" in this verse. Jehovah judges the Gentile nations (*the peoples*) by means of His *arms*; for no Gentile nation, or group of Gentile nations, can outsmart, outmaneuver, or overpower Him. Jehovah's *arm*, however, is the Servant whom we know to be Jesus, the *arm* for which the Gentiles *will wait expectantly*. Why? It is through the Servant, the *arm*, that *salvation* will be given to all who believe. The *arm* is personified and encouraged to *Awake* and *put on strength* in Isaiah 51:9, while in Isaiah 53:1-2 the *arm* is again personified as "*He,*" the suffering *Servant*, who according to Isaiah 53 died for the *sin* of mankind. The following verses give valuable input relating to Jehovah's *arm*: Exodus 6:6; 15:16; Psalm 89:10; Isaiah 40:10; 52:10; 59:16; 63:5, 12; Luke 1:51; John 12:37-38; Acts 13:17. A majority of these verses will be examined in more detail as we progress through the book of Isaiah. It would be encouraging to look up all the verses in God's word which mention the *arm*, and study them in the context in which they are written. What incredible continuity rests between the covers of God's letter to mankind!

From Isaiah 51:5, we can conclude that the *arm*, the Servant whom we know to be Jesus, is *salvation*. He is the very source of *salvation*, meaning there is *salvation* in no other. This is also a New Testament doctrine, confirmed by verses such as Acts 4:12.

Is. 51:6 "Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment, And its inhabitants will die in like manner, But My salvation shall be forever, And My righteousness shall not wane.

Note the phrase, “*But My salvation shall be forever.*” The *salvation* offered to mankind through the Servant is an eternal *salvation* that cannot be lost, canceled, or annulled. Nor can the *righteousness* that accompanies this *salvation*...wane. In other words, the *salvation* gained through faith in the Servant (Jesus) cannot be lost, confirming that the doctrine of eternal security finds its origin in the Old Testament rather than the New. Therefore, Isaiah 51:6 is communicating that, even though the present heavens and *earth* are temporary and will one day vanish (Matthew 24:35), the *salvation* offered by the Servant is eternal.

The doctrine of eternal security has been debated for centuries, for some think that *salvation* can be lost when sins of certain types are committed. What then is the correct mindset concerning the subject? The key factor in viewing this correctly has to do with determining whose responsibility it is to keep the believer saved. If it is the believer’s responsibility, *salvation* can be lost due to sin. If it is God’s responsibility, *salvation* is eternal, as verified by the following:

Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

The “*He*” is the Servant, Jesus, who is also the believer’s high priest. Because this high priest *always lives*, and has the responsibility of keeping the believer saved, *salvation* is secure and eternal. In fact, the only way *salvation* can be lost is for Jesus to die a second time. No problem here. He, according to Hebrews 10:10, died *once*, never to die again. The truth that *salvation is forever* (Isaiah 51:6) should comfort the believing remnant of the Jews from Isaiah’s day forward. It should comfort believing Gentiles as well, for they receive the same *salvation* that believing Jews receive—a *salvation* that is eternal and secure. This fact has much to do with what is addressed in verses 7 and 8.

Is. 51:7 "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, A people in whose heart is My law; Do not fear the reproach of man, Neither be dismayed at their revilings.

Note first of all that Jehovah is addressing the Jews *who know righteousness* and *in whose heart is God’s law*. In Jeremiah 31:33, we find that to have God’s *law* written on the *heart* is a sign of *salvation*. Therefore, because *salvation* is eternal (Isaiah 51:6), the believing remnant of the Jews need *not fear the reproach of man* nor *be dismayed as their revilings*. Why? Even death at the hands of their enemies would not negate the eternal blessings reserved for the redeemed. Paul, by the way, a Jew, understood this principle very well (Philippians 1:21).

Is. 51:8 "For the moth will eat them like a garment, And the grub will eat them like wool. But My righteousness shall be forever, And My salvation to all generations."

The enemies of the believing remnant will vanish (including the Antichrist and his armies at the end of the Tribulation), but the *righteousness* and *salvation* of the believing remnant will not. Consequently, why should the fear of man ever again be a factor in the life of a Jew who has accepted the Servant (Jesus) as Savior? This is Jehovah’s point here, a point also brought out in

the following verses: Psalm 56:4, 11; 118:6; Hebrews 13:6. History confirms Jehovah's miraculous provision for the believing Jewish remnant as she has faced the maltreatment of the nations. This provision will continue into the future, as is evidenced by the prophecies relating to the destruction of the Antichrist and his armies during The Campaign of Armageddon.

Is. 51:9 ¶ Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not Thou who cut Rahab in pieces, Who pierced the dragon?

A prayer if offered in verses 9-11, but the source of the prayer is debatable. Some view it as originating with Isaiah, others the believing remnant. Whatever the case, the *arm of the Lord* is called upon to act on behalf of the believing Jewish remnant.

This verse is discussed briefly in the notes associated with Isaiah 51:5. There we find that the *arm* is the Servant who would bring *salvation*. This Servant, the *arm of the Lord* (Isaiah 51:9), is called upon to *Awake as in the days of old*. The phrase, "*days of old*," points to specific *days* when He delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. How do we know this to be the case? The word "*Rahab*" is Egypt, as confirmed by Isaiah 30:7. The word "*dragon*" makes reference to Pharaoh; for the same Hebrew word used for "*dragon*" in Isaiah 51:9 is translated "*monster*" in Ezekiel 29:3, the *monster* being Pharaoh. It was the *arm of the Lord*, the second Person of the Trinity, *who cut Rahab in pieces* (destroyed the Egyptian armies) and *pierced the dragon* (took Pharaoh's first-born son). Therefore, the prayer of Isaiah 51:9 requests that the *arm of the Lord* bring deliverance for the believing remnant of Israel as He once did for the entire nation during her departure from Egypt.

Is. 51:10 Was it not Thou who dried up the sea, The waters of the great deep; Who made the depths of the sea a pathway For the redeemed to cross over?

Verse 10 ties in well with verse 9, for it makes reference to the parting of *the sea* (the Red Sea) that occurred during Israel's Exodus from Egypt. Obviously, it was the *arm of the Lord* of verse 9 who accomplished this feat. In fact, it was *the angel of the Lord* who *appeared* to Moses in the *burning...bush* of Exodus 3:2, *the angel of the Lord* being the second Person of the Trinity, who we now know to be the Servant, the arm of the Lord, the Savior, who not only parted the Red Sea but also *redeemed* the nation from Egypt (51:10).

Is. 51:11 So the ransomed of the Lord will return, And come with joyful shouting to Zion; And everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

There is no doubt that it was the *arm of the Lord* of Isaiah 51:9 that brought physically redeemed Israel out of Egypt and through *the wilderness* (1Corinthians 10:1-5) to eventually enjoy the land of Canaan in the days of Joshua, the judges, and the kings. He will also, through His Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation, protect *the ransomed of the Lord* (Isaiah 51:11), the spiritually redeemed remnant of the Jews, and allow them to enjoy the Messianic Kingdom in the refurbished homeland of their ancestors. Much *gladness and joy* will be associated with this return, all *sorrow and sighing* having fled away. This truth should comfort any believer within the Jewish nation from Isaiah's day forward.

It is interesting that Isaiah 51:11 is a quote from Isaiah 35:10, especially considering that Isaiah 35:1-9 addresses some of the blessings received by spiritually regenerated Israel during the Messianic Kingdom. What Isaiah is doing here is reminding God of what He had prophesied earlier concerning events that will transpire in Israel's future.

Is. 51:12 ¶ "I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you are afraid of man who dies, And of the son of man who is made like grass;

God answers the prayer of verses 9-11 in verses 12-16. What Jehovah states in verse 12 is simple. Why should His people fear *man*, who both *dies* and *is made like grass*, when they can fear the eternal God who desires to bring comfort?

Is. 51:13 That you have forgotten the Lord your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens, And laid the foundations of the earth; That you fear continually all day long because of the fury of the oppressor, As he makes ready to destroy? But where is the fury of the oppressor?

The only way a believer can be defeated by man is to temporarily forget who *the Lord* is and what He has promised. Only by considering the superiority of *the Lord*, the Creator of *the heavens* and *the earth*, can the believing remnant of the Jews overcome their fear of *the oppressor*.

Is. 51:14 "The exile will soon be set free, and will not die in the dungeon, nor will his bread be lacking.

Every Jew alive at the end of the Tribulation will accept Christ as Messiah, confirmed by Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Romans 11:26 (and a wealth of other verses as well). This believing remnant will be freed from exile, released from *the dungeon*, and have their physical needs miraculously supplied by the God who has brought deliverance. All of this will occur in conjunction with Christ's Second Coming; for once the enemies of the Jews are destroyed, the entire Jewish remnant will return to their homeland free of concern.

Is. 51:15 "For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the Lord of hosts is His name).

Because of God's power, the believing Jewish remnant can know that the promise of verse 14 will come to pass. After all, God's *name* is "*the Lord of hosts*," pointing to His omnipotence (limitless power).

Is. 51:16 "And I have put My words in your mouth, and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'"

The Jews are the most persecuted *people* on *the earth*. Why then have they not become extinct? Jehovah has *put His words in* the mouths of the believing remnant. Beginning with the days of Abraham (Genesis 11), a remnant of Jewish believers has always been on *the earth*. In fact, it is because of this believing remnant that God has so miraculously protected the nation since her inception (the notes associated with Isaiah 1:9 tie in well here). Consequently, the Hebrew Christians of our day are the reason the nation exists today. However, the unredeemed Jews, who should be thanking the Hebrew Christians for their very existence, presently hate the Jews who have accepted Christ as Messiah. What a contradiction!

The fact that Jehovah has *covered* the believing remnant *with the shadow of His hand* (Isaiah 51:16) is the only explanation as to why the Jews continue to populate *the earth*. He will persist in doing so until they return to their homeland in a state of belief to enjoy the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom. In the book of Revelation, however, we find that the present *heavens* and *earth* are severely damaged due to the judgments of the Tribulation. Therefore, they will be refurbished (Isaiah 65:17) in preparation for the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom (Isaiah

65:18-25). This is the meaning of the phrase, “to establish the heavens, to found the earth,” from Isaiah 51:16. By no means does this phrase point to the *new heaven and...new earth* of Revelation 21:1, for they are part of the Eternal Order that follows the Messianic Kingdom.

The phrase, “and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people,’” points to Millennial Jerusalem. This is easily understood when coupled with Isaiah 65:18-19. Therefore, not only will the *heavens* and *earth* be refurbished in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom, but Jerusalem will be rebuilt as well. In Ezekiel 48:30-35, we find a description of the Millennial *city*, whose name will be changed from “Jerusalem” to “*The Lord is there*” (v.35).

Is. 51:17 ¶ Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk from the Lord's hand the cup of His anger; The chalice of reeling you have drained to the dregs.

Isaiah addresses the judgment that will come on *Jerusalem* in verses 17-20. When these verses are taken through the sixty-six books of God’s word, it becomes apparent that the severity of the judgment results from Israel’s rejection of the Servant at His First Coming (for more input concerning Christ’s rejection, read the notes associated with Isaiah 49:1-7). Therefore, Isaiah is allowed to prophesy concerning the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, a destruction that greatly superceded the Babylonian destruction of 586 BC. This is why Isaiah describes Jerusalem as having *drained to the dregs* (fully consumed) *the cup of God’s anger* (v.17). Jesus, in Luke 21:20-24, spoke of this same destruction some forty years before it occurred.

Note: The Old Testament writing prophets said little about the Church age (which began in Acts 2, in 30 AD, and will continue until the Rapture of the church sometime before the beginning of the Tribulation); so the subject addressed here is rarely mentioned in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Is. 51:18 There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne; Nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.

Just as Isaiah foresaw in this verse, God’s judgment of AD 70 resulted in a severe decrease in Jerusalem’s population. Josephus, a Jewish historian who witnessed this event, wrote that 1.1 million Jews lost their lives at the hands of the Romans.

Is. 51:19 These two things have befallen you; Who will mourn for you? The devastation and destruction, famine and sword; How shall I comfort you?

The terms “*devastation*,” “*destruction*,” “*famine*,” and “*sword*” describe very well the conditions that existed inside Jerusalem in 70 AD. This is documented in much detail by Josephus, a Jewish historian of that day.

Is. 51:20 Your sons have fainted, They lie helpless at the head of every street, Like an antelope in a net, Full of the wrath of the Lord, The rebuke of your God.

Like an antelope in a net, the Jews who survived the Roman onslaught of 70 AD were captured and removed from Jerusalem. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived from 37 AD to around 100 AD, recorded the following concerning the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD:

The total number of prisoners taken during the war was 97,000, and those who died during the siege 1,100,000. The greater part of these were of

Jewish blood, but not natives of the city, because just before the siege, people had flocked into Jerusalem from all parts of the country for the feast of Unleavened Bread. (W VI, 420 Josephus; The Essential Writings, by Paul L. Maier—page 367)

This explains why the Jews remain dispersed throughout the world even today. God's *rebuke* is what brought this about, due to the nation's rejection of the Messiah at His First Coming.

Is. 51:21 ¶ Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted, Who are drunk, but not with wine:

In verses 21-23, we find that God will one day remove His hand of judgment from the Jews and place it upon their enemies. This will occur in conjunction with the spiritual regeneration of the Jewish nation at the end of the Tribulation (all Jews on the earth at that time), an event which is followed by Christ's Second Coming.

In verse 21, Isaiah states that the *afflicted* of the Jewish nation, *Who are drunk, but not with wine* (words that describe the Jews at the end of the Tribulation, all of which will have been redeemed due to accepting Jesus as Messiah), will *hear* what He has to say. Even though the spiritually regenerated nation will experience great persecution at the hands of her enemies, help will be on the way, the help being Jesus at His Second Coming.

Is. 51:22 Thus says your Lord, the Lord, even your God Who contends for His people, "Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling; The chalice of My anger, You will never drink it again.

This "*cup of reeling*" will have caused Israel to pay *Double for all her sins* (Isaiah 40:2)—something no other nation has had to experience. *The Jews will never drink it (the cup) again.* The reason this will be the case is explained in verse 23.

Is. 51:23 "And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, Who have said to you, 'Lie down that we may walk over you.' You have even made your back like the ground, And like the street for those who walk over it."

The cup of reeling of verse 22 will be taken from Israel and given to her *tormentors* (v.23). Our study of The Campaign of Armageddon (addressed in the notes associated with Isaiah 13:3) confirms this to be so; for Jesus will protect the believing Jewish remnant at the Second Coming by destroying the Gentile armies of the Antichrist along with the Antichrist himself.