
Observations from Isaiah

LESSON XXXIX : THE CALL FOR GOD'S PEOPLE TO HEAR AND OBEY (48: 1-22)

General outline (from Oswalt's *Isaiah*):

- I. INTRODUCTION: THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF GOD'S PEOPLE (1-5)
- II. A CALL TO SERVANTHOOD (6)
- III. BASIS FOR SERVANTHOOD: WHOM SHALL WE TRUST? (7-39)
- IV. THE VOCATION OF SERVANTHOOD (40-55)
 - A. MOTIVE FOR SERVANTHOOD: GRACE (40-48)
 - 1. The Servant's Lord (40)
 - 2. The Servant of the Lord (41-44)
 - 3. The Lord Redeems His Servant (44:23-47:15)
 - 4. Hear the Lord (48:1-22)
 - a. The Word of God (48:1-11)
 - (1) Former things (48:1-5)
 - (2) New things (48:6-11)
 - b. Listen to Me (48:12-22)
 - (1) The Lord of eternity and time (48:12-16)
 - (2) O, that you had listened (48:17-22)

The Word of God (48:1-11)

Former things (48:1-5)

Listen to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and come from the line of Judah, you who take oaths in the name of the LORD and invoke the God of Israel — but not in truth or righteousness — you who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and rely on the God of Israel — the LORD Almighty is his name: I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. For I knew how stubborn you

Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is his name. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou

Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, Who are called by the name of Israel, And from the waters of Judah came out, Who are swearing by the name of Jehovah, And of the God of Israel make mention, Not in truth nor in righteousness. For from the Holy City they have been called, And on the God of Israel been supported, Jehovah of Hosts [is] His name. The former things from that time I declared, And from my mouth they have gone forth, And I proclaim them, Suddenly I have done, and it cometh. From my knowing that thou

were; the sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was bronze. Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, 'My idols did them; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.' (NIV)

art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. (KJV)

art obstinate, And a sinew of iron thy neck, And thy forehead brass, And I declare to thee from that time, Before it cometh I have caused thee to hear, Lest thou say, 'Mine idol hath done them, And my graven image, And my molten image did command them. (YLT)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON “HIGHER CRITICISM” — “Higher criticism” is that criticism of bible texts that is not profitable but rather destructive. *It is proper to ask questions concerning any text with the goal always being to understand better what the Lord says in a passage. But those questions become destructive when the inspiration of the text itself is questioned.* Examples of higher criticism is saying Moses did not write the Pentateuch but rather it comes from four different sources; Daniel in the 6th century BC could not have prophesied the history which followed; nor could Isaiah in the 8th century BC make the prophecies we are now studying. It is not a question of “What is the Lord saying in this passage?” but rather “How or when was this written since the Lord could not have written this when it was supposedly written. That would involve a miraculous spiritual event.” That is the reasoning behind the statements that Isaiah could not have written Isaiah 40-66, because there is so much prophecy written with great detail (even to the naming of Cyrus who would eventually free the Jews from Babylon) which came to pass exactly as prophesied. *Follow that thinking to its conclusion. If God cannot work supernaturally in the world, then Jesus Christ was not who He said He was. Jesus without question claimed to be God in human form, proving this by His resurrection from the dead. But if God does not work supernaturally in our world, then Jesus could not have been born of a virgin, He could not have performed the miracles recorded in the gospels, nor could He have been bodily raised from the dead. In essence therefore we would have no Bible, no Savior, nor anything to rely upon in Christianity. To deny these truths would make our faith nothing more than a feel-good religion with everyone trying their best to be a good person like the human Jesus. Sadly many (liberal churches) teach exactly that.* But to hold such a teaching destroys everything Isaiah is saying in this chapter. As in previous chapters, note Isaiah again gives the argument “God is God unlike the idols worshiped in Babylon and proves this by making prophecies then bringing them to pass” (note v3). *If this were written after the “prophecies” came to pass, then it would destroy everything Isaiah is saying here!*

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE CHAPTER — It is generally agreed the chapter divides easily into two sections: vv. 1-11 and vv. 12-22. Within these two divisions however there is little agreement as to how to make the divisions. This lesson will follow Oswalt’s division: vv. 1-5 the former things; vv. 6-11 the new things; vv. 12-16 the Creator’s purpose; and vv. 17-22 an admonition to listen. “In vv. 1-11 Isaiah recaps the argument from prophecy that has been central to his claims in the previous chapters. He shows that God had foretold the events of the past long before they had occurred. He did this to forestall the possible claim that when some great event in Israel’s history had occurred, it was because some other god had done it. Now he has caused a prediction to be made that involves a new way of acting. He has done this precisely to show his creativity. If he were a god of this world, he would have to act in the same ways all the time. But because he is the Creator he can do things that, though new, are consistent with his character.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

“HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD” — V. 1 sets the tone for the rest of the chapter by calling upon Israel to “hear” the Lord. The word used here is the Hebrew word *šāma‘* and is used 10x in the next sixteen verses. *It has the sense of “hearing and obeying, hearing and taking appropriate action concerning the message.” Those who do not respond cannot be said to have heard in any meaningful sense.* That is the similar message throughout not only Isaiah but within both testaments: to truly “hear” implies “obedience.” That is why Jesus repeatedly said “blessed are those who hear the message...” concerning the various topics He was teaching. Did the people hear? – of course they all “heard” what He was saying. They could physically hear the words He was saying. *But to “hear” in the biblical sense is to listen, understand what is being said, and making the appropriate changes within our lives to coincide with what He is saying. In that sense we must all ask ourselves: “How much of the Word of God do I truly hear?” That may be measured directly by our obedience.*

ISRAEL DESCRIBED IN VARIOUS MANNERS — Isaiah sets the stage for what follows by piling up descriptions of Israel. By doing so, Isaiah may have been telling Israel to remember from whence they came. “There is the appeal to the past: Jacob, Israel, Judah. Who are we? The people who exist because of what God did to and with our ancestors. There is an appeal to religious affiliation: we have publicly identified ourselves with God, swearing by his name as the highest of all, praising him for all his glorious works on our behalf, declaring that he is our source of hope. There is the appeal of present identification: like it or not, we are the people of that Holy City, the city of the Lord, Jerusalem. Given all of that, then, we can hardly be neutral when the Holy One of Israel (v. 18) speaks. We ought to be preconditioned to hear and do what he says.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “The summons to hear is based upon the Israelitish nationality of those who are summoned, to which they still cling, and upon the relation in which they place themselves to the God of Israel. This gives to Jehovah the right to turn to them, and imposes upon them the duty to hearken to Him.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

EMPTY RELIGION — Isaiah also denounces the empty ritualistic religion of the Jews, something he has done before in his book. Isaiah says their profession of faith is neither reliable (truth) nor correct (righteousness). *“The prophet is trying to say that if the people as a whole were sincere in what they said about God, they would obey him, and in this instance would trust him when he said that he would use a pagan conqueror to achieve his good purposes.... How can Israel realize all the potential that its great heritage and profound faith have to offer? By squarely facing the contradiction between their words and their actions that is at the heart of their professed faith, by paying careful attention to all that God’s activities with them can teach, and by acting resolutely on what they learn.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *Are we the same? Do we even think of the words of the songs we are singing? Is our church attendance meaningless, a mere show, something we do out of habit or because we are forced to come? Where are our minds during the service – paying attention to the Pastor’s message or are we thinking of something that happened earlier in the week (or better yet, where are we going for dinner after the morning service)? Or do we make every effort to concentrate on what Pastor is saying from the Word of God? Do we make every effort to think of what we are singing and attempt to make those words come from our hearts as we sing? (a joke I heard many years back: Christians don’t tell lies – we sing them!)*

WHAT GOD HAS DONE IN THE PAST — *Isaiah’s first argument for Israel to hear and obey is what God had done for them in the past.* Examples of God working / speaking to Israel in the past is easily found in Abraham’s call, the exodus, the tabernacle, and so forth. Apparently no

single prophecy is meant here but rather the general observation of God's past workings. Isaiah also reminds his readers that God not only prophesied but also brought it to pass: *"I foretold the former things long ago ... then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass"* (v. 3).

WHY DID GOD WORK THROUGH PROPHECY? — "But what was the reason for prophecy? Why did God tell in advance what he was going to do? For the first time an explanation is given. He did it because of the fallen human nature. If some wonderful thing were to occur in our lives, whom would we tend to thank? God the transcendent creator? No, *my idol ... my handcrafted image!* Why? *Because the human spirit is not a blank page, equally ready to be inscribed with good or evil. It is, according to Isaiah and all the rest of the Bible, already blotted with a well-nigh incurable insistence on our own way at all costs.... This perversity of heart means that we refuse to see the normal signs that point to the existence of a God beyond time and space who is not subject to our control. To admit his existence would be to admit his right to rule our lives, an intolerable conclusion.*" [Oswalt, Isaiah]

The Word of God (48:1-11)

New things (48:6-11)

You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them? From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you. They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today. So you cannot say, 'Yes, I knew of them.' You have neither heard nor understood; from of old your ear has not been open. Well do I know how treacherous you are; you were called a rebel from birth. For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another. (NIV)

Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. (KJV)

Thou hast heard, see the whole of it, And ye, do ye not declare? I have caused thee to hear new things from this time, And things reserved that ye knew not. Now they have been produced and not from that time, Yea, before the day, and thou hast not heard them, Lest thou say, 'Lo, I have known them.' Yea, thou hast not heard, Yea, thou hast not known, Yea, from that time not opened hath thine ear, For I have known thou dealest treacherously, And 'Transgressor from the belly,' One is crying to thee. For My name's sake I defer Mine anger, And My praise I restrain for thee, So as not to cut thee off. Lo, I have refined thee, and not with silver, I have chosen thee in a furnace of affliction. For My sake, for Mine own sake, I do [it], For how is it polluted? And Mine honour to another I give not. (YLT)

“After an opening transition summing up the point about the former things (v. 6a), this stanza focuses on the point at issue: God’s ability to do something brand new, something different from what he had done before in the life of his people.... Isaiah says, learn the principle being taught by fulfilled prophecy: *God is in charge and he is dependable. But do not expect to box him into some system that you have devised by observing him in the past; that is for idols.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

GOD GIVES NEW PROPHECIES — “Why did God not foretell these things? It is fairly easy to imagine the situation in which this discussion arose. The people might have been saying: If it is true that we are going to suffer a similar fate with Samaria and go into exile, but to Babylon rather than Assyria, and then be restored by an emperor from the east named Cyrus, to a new messianic kingdom, why didn’t Moses or some other prophet tell us about these things? Isaiah’s answer is blunt. *Just as prophecy was given so as to refute the claims of idols (v. 5), so not all prophecy was given at once in order to refute the claims of human omniscience. All our attempts to be independent are frustrated by our lack of knowledge. If we could just know the future, then we would not need to live in this state of helplessness — or so we think.... Enough information in enough time so that it will be unmistakably clear that God is in control of history, but not enough so that people can become secure in their own foreknowledge and not need to live in dependence on God.*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] *Note God does not reveal His plan for us all at once either. We walk by faith and obedience. “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Ps 119:105). “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Prov 3:5,6) Note also: Prophecy is not given to satisfy our curiosity, for us to merely ‘know the future’. Rather prophecy is given to edify our faith that we can trust God. That is a lesson for those who’s only Bible studies involve the second coming! (cp Acts 1:7)*

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD — The Lord has repeatedly stated He acted the way in which He did because of the depravity of man, the rebellion of Israel. The question might therefore be asked: why has He not just forsaken Israel? It would be their deserved fate, why not just abandon them? The answer to that question begins in the exodus and continues on through the existence of Israel. “When God entered into a covenant with the people of Israel, his name (his reputation) came to be inextricably associated with them. Moses presented this argument to God when God asked why he should not destroy Israel at Sinai after the golden calf incident.... *Will the nation looking at God’s justice accuse him of capriciousness (like all their gods)? Or will they see a God who is unlike all the rest in his incredible patience and mercy?*” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

NOT JUDGEMENT BUT CHILD TRAINING — If God is gracious, then why the exile in the first place? The answer is not to destroy His people; if His desire was to destroy them then Israel would have been cut off by Babylon, not carried away captive. *If God was finished with the Jews then they would have been left in captivity without hope, not brought forth by Cyrus. But the captivity was not judgement per se, rather it was discipline and chastisement. It was meant to purify Israel from their sins.* The mention of not being refined as silver has the sense of discipline in moderation, not total.

SAVED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD — the wording of v. 11 is strange according to the commentaries but the sense is clear: “If he either destroys or abandons his people, the world will say that no more glory is due him than any other deity. That perception is incorrect, for it is his glory, and his alone, that of the only Holy One, that fills the earth (6:3). He will demonstrate this truth by delivering his people against all the odds, whether political or spiritual. On the people’s part, they must make up their minds at last to give him absolute loyalty.” [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

Listen to Me (48:12-22)

The Lord of eternity and time (48:12-16)

Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together. Come together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols has foretold these things? The LORD's chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon; his arm will be against the Babylonians. I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him. I will bring him, and he will succeed in his mission. Come near me and listen to this: From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there. And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit. (NIV)

Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me. (KJV)

Hearken to me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called one, I [am] He, I [am] first, and I [am] last; Also, My hand hath founded earth, And My right hand stretched out the heavens, I am calling unto them, they stand together. Be gathered all of you, and hear, Who among them did declare these things? Jehovah hath loved him, He doth His pleasure on Babylon, And His arm [is on] the Chaldeans. I — I have spoken, yea, I have called him, I have brought him in, And he hath made prosperous his way. Come ye near unto me, hear this, Not from the beginning in secret spake I, From the time of its being, there [am] I, And now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me, and His Spirit. (YLT)

Considering their past unfaithfulness, God once again calls upon His people to hear and obey. *“Since God is the sole creator of the universe, the only one who can declare his purpose in advance, they should not hesitate to believe his prediction of deliverance, even though it should come through the pagan emperor Cyrus (vv. 12-16).”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

GOD'S SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO DO AS IT PLEASES HIM — God once again stresses His sovereignty as the basis for his choosing Cyrus. *God is able to deliver and has a right to do it as He wills.* Note a difference in emphasis: God repeats from v. 1 for Israel to hear but in v. 1 their right to even call themselves as belonging to God is questioned. *Here the call to hear is repeated but the basis is different: now the emphasis is upon the fact that God called them!*

AN INVITATION TO BELIEVE — vv. 14-16 forms the conclusion of the point the Lord is making: *“Since these things are true, what conclusions should one draw? The people should not contend with God over his chosen means of deliverance. Rather, they should accept the veracity of his promises as they have come through the prophet, and practice belief rather than disbelief.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]

CYRUS TO DESTROY BABYLON — note the progression of the Lord's reference to Cyrus: ‘my shepherd’ in 44:28; ‘my anointed’ in 45:1; ‘the man of my counsel’ in 46:11; and now ‘the one loved by the Lord’ in 46:14. *“The Lord loves him* is an expression of the election of Cyrus for the

task at hand.... It may also, though not necessarily, express a special affection for the man who would accomplish God's purpose for him." [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] "This makes explicit for the first time that Cyrus's work would bring down Babylonia (v. 15; cf. 14:13-23)." [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

MYSTERY SPEAKER — "The difficulty is in identifying the speaker. It clearly cannot be God, yet there is no indication of change. Does this mean that the speaker in the first part of the verse is, despite initial impressions, not God?" [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] Oswalt states there are four possible manners in which to interpret this verse:

- the last part of the verse should not be there but was accidentally inserted; we reject this interpretation
- the entire verse speaks of the prophet; this is unlikely however since the first part of the verse speaks in majestic terms not applicable to Isaiah
- the first part of the verse speaks of God, then the last part speaks of Isaiah. Calvin taught this and Oswalt agrees with that interpretation. "This is surely another case of the close identity between God and the prophet. God has been speaking through the prophet. He calls the people to listen because of all he (God) has said in the past, and how he (God) has revealed himself in the events of their lives. Now, the prophet says, God is speaking again through me (the prophet) whom he (God) has inspired with his (God's) Spirit." [Oswalt, *Isaiah*]
- others identify the final speaker to be the Messiah. This is taught by Edward Young, Kidner. Keil and Delitzsch, and Grogan, among others. "[Some conservative commentators] have argued that the new speaker introduced here (or in the whole verse) is in fact God's Servant, the Servant of the songs. He is clearly not simply the Lord, and the phrase 'Sovereign LORD' recurs in 50:4-5, 7, 9, in the context of the third Servant Song. Unlike the first and fourth songs, where it is God who speaks about him, here, as in the second and third, he himself speaks. Perhaps he is introduced here because Cyrus's work is in fact simply a type of harbinger of the much greater deliverance he would bring to God's people." [Grogan, *Isaiah*] "Since the prophet has not spoken in his own person before, whereas, on the other hand, these words are followed in Isa 49:1ff. by an address concerning himself from that servant of Jehovah who announces himself as the restorer of Israel and light of the Gentiles, and who cannot therefore be either Israel as a nation or the author of these prophecies, nothing is more natural than to suppose that the words, '*And now hath the Lord,*' etc., form a prelude to the words of the One unequalled servant of Jehovah concerning Himself which occur in ch. 49. The surprisingly mysterious way in which the words of Jehovah suddenly pass into those of His messenger, which is only comparable to Zech 2:12ff., 4:9 (where the speaker is also not the prophet, but a divine messenger exalted above him), can only be explained in this manner.... After Jehovah has prepared the way for the redemption of Israel by the raising up of Cyrus, in accordance with prophecy, and by his success in arms, He has sent him, the speaker in this case, to carry out, in a mediatorial capacity, the redemption thus prepared, and that not by force of arms, but in the power of the Spirit of God (Isa 42:1; cf., Zech 4:6)." [K&D, *Isaiah*]

THE TRINITY IN THE OT? — Although I realize the controversy involved in these verses, it is quite possible the Messiah is the speaker in the last part of v. 16. If that interpretation is correct, then we have in this verse the entire Trinity: God the Father: '*Come ye near unto me, hear this, Not from the beginning in secret spake I, From the time of its being, there [am] I*'; the Lord Jesus: '*And now the Lord Jehovah hath sent me,*'; and the Holy Spirit: '*and His Spirit.*' (YLT)

“Consequently the Spirit is not spoken of here as joining in the sending; nor do we ever find the Spirit mentioned in such co-ordination as this. The meaning is, that it is also sent, i.e., sent in and with the servant of Jehovah, who is speaking here.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

Listen to Me (48:12-22)

O, that you had listened (48:17-22)

This is what the LORD says — your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sand, your children like its numberless grains; their name would never be cut off nor destroyed from before me. Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob. They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and water gushed out. There is no peace, says the LORD, for the wicked. (NIV)

Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob. And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked. (KJV)

Thus said Jehovah, thy redeemer, The Holy One of Israel, ‘I [am] Jehovah thy God, teaching thee to profit, Causing thee to tread in the way thou goest. O that thou hadst attended to My commands, Then as a river is thy peace, And thy righteousness as billows of the sea, And as sand is thy seed, And the offspring of thy bowels as its gravel, Not cut off nor destroyed his name before Me. Go out from Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans, With a voice of singing declare, Cause ye this to be heard, Bring it forth unto the end of the earth, Say, Redeemed hath Jehovah His servant Jacob. And they have not thirsted in waste places, He hath caused them to go on, Waters from a rock he hath caused to flow to them, Yea, he cleaveth a rock, and flow do waters. There is no peace, said Jehovah, to the wicked!’ (YLT)

THE GOD WHO GUIDES — These verses form the conclusion, what might have been if the Lord’s people would have listened to the Lord. Note the emphasis found here. God did not reveal Himself to dominate them or to become a cruel taskmaster to them. Rather He is their guide: ‘*I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go*’ (v. 17). Even the Hebrew words for the books of the Law, the Torah, means ‘*instruction*.’ Israel forgot this and so does our generation. ***God’s word and His commands are not meant to stifle but rather to fulfill and enrich our lives. The only reason we often resent His word is because of our rebellious sinful nature. His word is life; to reject that word is to invite death!***

“Every sensitive teacher knows the pain of heart that comes when he pours himself out for students who prove to be unteachable. Israel proved to be like that; and God expresses his deep concern for them, because they are themselves the losers. Here is one of the Bible's great cries from the very heart of God (cf. Gen 3:9, Deut 5:28-29; Ps 81:13-14; Hos 11:8; Luke 13:34-35).” [Grogan, *Isaiah*]

‘IF ONLY ...’ — *“The imagery seems to suggest both continuity and abundance. Those who live on the banks of a river need fear no cessation in their water supply, and those who stand on the beach on a windy day are unfailingly impressed by the continual march of the waves onto the shore. There is no stopping them. So it might have been for Israel had they only listened to God’s instruction.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] I don’t know what heaven will be like but I cannot help but think it will cross all of our minds, *‘If only...’*. “Both of these (peace and righteousness) ... are introduced here as a divine gift, not merited by Israel, but only conditional upon that faith which gives heed to the word of God, especially to the word which promises redemption, and appropriates it to itself. Another consequence of the obedience of faith is, that Israel thereby becomes a numerous and eternally enduring nation.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

FLEE BABYLON! — at first glance this appears to refer to Israel being released from captivity. Possibly, but when Babylon fell, Israel did not flee in the sense of escaping. Cyrus set them free and the left orderly (at least those who wanted to leave). Likely the sense is for Israel to ‘flee’ in the ethical sense; ‘flee’ from the attraction of the world. The admonition may have been a call for Israel to remain faithful in captivity.

MAKE YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE — *“Nevertheless, while God’s promises to Abraham and his children would be kept, and the nation would not be allowed to be wiped out, no individuals within the nation should presume on that election and believe that they could therefore sin with impunity. God had promised that those who would listen to his admonitions would have peace like a river (48:18), and he had declared that he would free his people from Babylon, but those promises should offer no comfort at all to those who showed by their wickedness that they had no intention of committing their way to God. In the same way, we may be certain that God will not abandon his church; he will preserve it and keep it in all events. but that is not a warrant for individual Christians to believe that they can live ungodly lives secure in their own election.”* [Oswalt, *Isaiah*] “But there is no peace, saith Jehovah, to the [wicked] : this is the name given to loose men, i.e., to those whose inward moral nature is loosened, without firm hold, and therefore in a state of chaotic confusion, because they are without God.” [K&D, *Isaiah*]

“For my own sake, for my own sake, I do
this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will
not yield my glory to another.”

— Isaiah 48:11 NIV