

# OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

## Lesson 48

### The Isaiah Challenge

If you were in a Jewish synagogue service, the liturgy would have several readings from Scripture. The *Torah* reading would come from one of the first five books in the Bible (appropriately called “the *Torah*”). Following the *Torah* reading, would come a reading from the Old Testament Prophets. This reading is called a “*haftorah*,” and it is typically linked thematically to the Torah reading.<sup>1</sup> These readings typically link the Torah passage to a related passage from the Prophets. How this liturgy came about is lost in the ages. One theory that dates from medieval times has the *haftorah* readings arising from about 168 B.C. In that day, the ruler over Palestine was Antiochus Epiphanes, a great antagonist to Judaism. The theory rests on Antiochus forbidding the reading of the Torah under penalty of death. As a substitute the Scribes had a portion read from the prophets that corresponded to the appropriate Torah reading for the day.<sup>2</sup> While we cannot state for certain whether this is the origination, we do know that at the time of Jesus, it was normal to have synagogue readings from the Prophets (as noted later in the lesson!)

Out of all the Prophets in the Hebrew Old Testament, more *haftorah* readings come from the prophet Isaiah, than any other. This is especially remarkable considering that the Hebrew Bible classifies the prophets much broader than the Christian Bible. Prophets in the Hebrew Bible includes the Major Prophets, the Minor Prophets, but also the books of Joshua, Judges, Kings, and Chronicles!

The popularity of Isaiah among Jews has always been significant. Early Jewish writings in the intertestamental period accord legends and stories of Isaiah. The Dead Sea Scrolls contained carefully maintained and copied Isaiah texts, as well as many references to Isaiah in other DSS writings. The early rabbinic writings cite the prophet Isaiah more often than other prophetic text.

The comments to the Jewish Study Bible notes the importance of Isaiah in Jewish thought:

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<sup>1</sup> In most synagogues there is a book called the Hertz Chumash which has the Hebrew and English of the Five Books of Moses (the “Torah”) and the corresponding Haftorahs. See, Hertz, J. H., *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text English Translation and Commentary*, (Socino Press 1960). The Hebrew term *haftarah* means “conclusion,” appropriate as these readings from the prophets conclude the readings commenced with the Torah.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, at 20.

Isaiah is a major source of prooftexts for some of Judaism's main tenets, such as messianism, the centrality of Jerusalem, and economic and social justice.<sup>3</sup>

Isaiah's popularity extends beyond the Jews and the synagogue. By at least one scholar's count, "the New Testament contains over 40 direct quotes from and nearly 390 allusions to Isaiah. Isaiah accounts for nearly one-fourth of the quotes from the Old Testament in the New Testament."<sup>4</sup> Over and over significant aspects of western culture have emphasized passages from Isaiah. Isaiah has been subject to many songs, many paintings, and many narratives and stories.

This raises the question: How well do we know the famous sayings of Isaiah? This lesson is a bit different than our past lessons. This lesson is built around an Isaiah challenge: In multiple-choice fashion, we probe our memory and knowledge concerning the writings of Isaiah. Some questions will be easy, and some will be hard! After all, what fun is it to take a test where the answers all come easy! The questions come first, the answers and explanations follow. Then we conclude with the points for home! So sharpen your pencils and let us begin the Isaiah Challenge!

## THE ISAIAH CHALLENGE

1. Which Isaiah passage is on the "Isaiah Wall" in Ralph Bunche Park, New York City near the U.N. building? Hint: this passage is generally taken as an unofficial mission statement by the U.N.
  - a. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares. And their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore."
  - b. "I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."
  - c. "He will bring forth justice to the nations."
  - d. "All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble."

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<sup>3</sup> Berlin, Adele, and Brettler, Marc Zvi, *The Jewish Study Bible*, (Oxford 2004), at 780.

<sup>4</sup> Mangano, M., *Old Testament Introduction*, (College Press 2005), at 460.

2. On August 28, 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King gave one of the great speeches of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, commonly known as the “I Have a Dream” speech. Which line from his speech is a quote from Isaiah?
  - a. “The whirlwinds ... will continue to shake the foundations ... until the bright day of justice emerges.”
  - b. We will not be satisfied until “justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.”
  - c. “It came as “a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.”
  - d. “...every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”
  
3. The film *Seven Days to Utopia* is based on David Cook’s book, *Golf’s Sacred Journey*, following the broken career of golfer Luke Chisholm. The book begins with a quote from Isaiah 30:21. Which passage is it?
  - a. “Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.””
  - b. “The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning, the crown has fallen from our head.”
  - c. “I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish.”
  - d. “Luke, my fellow worker...the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”
  
4. Eric Liddell, in the movie *Chariots of Fire*, delivers a sermon at the Paris Church of Scotland during the 1924 Paris Olympics. In the sermon, he quotes from Isaiah 40:31. Which passage below is the Isaiah passage?
  - a. “Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

- b. “But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”
  - c. “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly.”
  - d. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain.”
5. Which Isaiah passage is taken by some scholars to be speaking of Satan and his fall?
- a. “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world— he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”
  - b. “And he said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’”
  - c. “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.”
  - d. "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering... You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God... You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God... Your heart was

proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground.”

6. Which name for the devil comes from Isaiah?
  - a. Beelzebub
  - b. Lucifer
  - c. Satan
  - d. Accuser
  
7. Which musical piece draws some of its most famous lyrics from Isaiah?
  - a. *Jesus Christ Superstar*
  - b. Handel's *Messiah*
  - c. *Godspell*
  - d. *The Marriage of Figaro*
  
8. Which of the following terms is ***not used*** by scholars in referencing aspects of the Biblical book Isaiah:
  - a. The Fifth Gospel
  - b. The Hebrew Revelation.
  - c. The Mount Rushmore of Biblical Prophecy
  - d. Deutero-Isaiah
  
9. More so than most any modern band, U2 constantly weaves scriptures and scriptural allusions into their songs. One of U2's most well known songs is *Sunday Bloody Sunday*. The song is a composite of a number of different Scriptures, one of which comes from Isaiah. Which quote from the song comes from Isaiah:
  - a. "The trench is dug within our hearts... mothers, children, brothers, sisters torn apart."

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- b. "Wipe your tears away; oh, wipe your blood shot eyes."
- c. "We eat and drink while tomorrow they die."
- d. "How long...how long must we sing this song?"

10. While on the subject of U2, which U2 song is a double dose of Isaiah?

- a. *White as Snow*
- b. *40*
- c. *Yahweh*
- d. *Rattle and Hum*

11. Which Isaiah vision is echoed in the Book of Revelation?

- a. "Above him stood the Seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another, 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!'"
- b. "Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me."
- c. "For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples."
- d. "The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the Lord will be your everlasting light."

12. Luke 4:16ff relates that Jesus went to his hometown synagogue in Nazareth and was invited to read from the Prophets. This would have been a *Haftorah* reading mentioned in the introduction to this lesson. Jesus unrolled the Isaiah scroll, and found the place we call Isaiah 61:1-2 and read it. After reading it, he rolled the scroll back up and gave it to the attendant. As all eyes in the synagogue looked at him, Jesus declared, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Initially the response was polite, but it quickly turned and the people sought to kill Jesus. Which Isaiah passage below is the one Jesus claimed was being fulfilled?

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- a. "Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples. Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.' And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken."
- b. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn."
- c. "Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted."
- d. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law."

13. Like the Psalms, Isaiah contains a number of songs and passages in verse. Three of the songs below come from the Psalms. One comes from Isaiah. Which is Isaiah?

- a. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his

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name is exalted. "Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

- b. To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.
- c. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore. For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong. Do well, O Lord, to those who are good, and to those who are upright in their hearts! But those who turn aside to their crooked ways the Lord will lead away with evildoers! Peace is upon Israel!
- d. I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

14. When Paul was awaiting trial in Rome, he spent his initial days trying to teach the Jews in Rome about Jesus. Some were convinced by what he said, but others did not believe. These disagreeable people quit coming to hear Paul after Paul quoted which passage from Isaiah:

- a. Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; as destruction from the Almighty it will come! Therefore all hands will be feeble, and every human heart will melt. They will be dismayed: pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at one another; their faces will be aflame.
- b. Hear this, O house of Jacob, who is called by the name of Israel, and who came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the

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Lord and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right. For they call themselves after the holy city, and stay themselves on the God of Israel; the Lord of hosts is his name. "The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth, and I announced them; then suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass,

- c. And he said, "Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."
- d. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

15. The Gentiles know Paul.” According to Paul’s writings in Romans, what Isaiah passage helped Paul understand the Christian mission to the Gentiles?

- a. I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, "Here am I, here am I," to a nation that was not called by my name.
- b. In days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit.
- c. Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,"
- d. Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

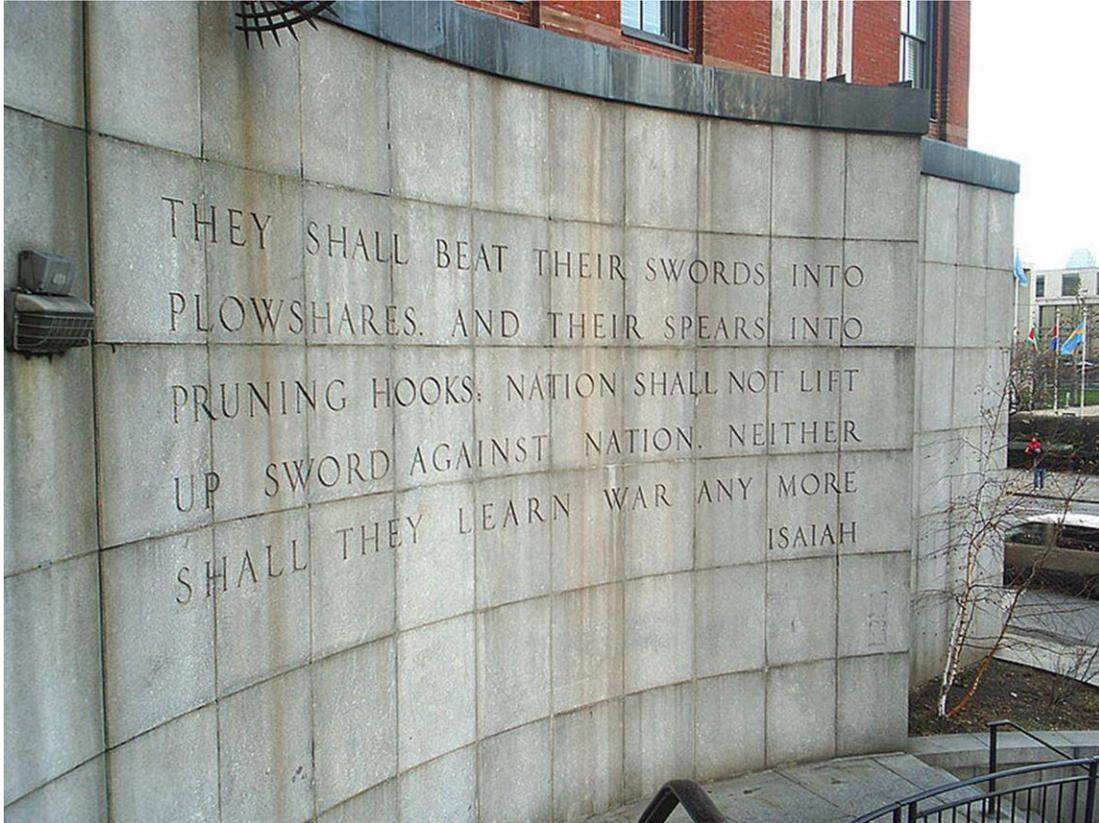
16. Which Bob Dylan sound tracks the imagery of Isaiah 21?
- a. *Blowin' in the Wind.*
  - b. *The Times They Are Changin'.*
  - c. *A Hard Rains Gonna Fall.*
  - d. *All Along the Watchtower.*
17. Which American patriotic song strongly relies upon words and images from Isaiah?
- a. *America the Beautiful.*
  - b. *The Star Spangled Banner.*
  - c. *The Battle Hymn of the Republic.*
  - d. *The Star Spangled Banner.*

READY FOR THE ANSWERS?

They start on the next page!

## THE ISAIAH CHALLENGE ANSWERS

1. (a). While each of these passages is from Isaiah, only the first is on the Isaiah Wall and is deemed the unofficial statement of the United Nations.



2. King quoted Scriptures and hymns in his famous speech. The passage from Isaiah is (d). The E.S.V. translates it:

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Is. 40:4-5).

King used the King James Version and transposed a couple of phrases, but otherwise nailed it! U2's song about King ("*Pride in the Name of Love*") also references an Isaiah passage in the line, "one man come, he to justify," which echoes Isaiah 53:11 promising God's servant would come to "justify many."

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3. (a) is the right answer. The other passages are Biblical, but not from Isaiah. (b) is from Lamentations 5:15 (c) is from Ezekiel 17:24, and (d) is from Philemon 1:24.

4. Liddell preached his sermon from Isaiah 40:31 which is (b). (a) Is from Hebrews 12:1, (c) is from 1 Cor. 9:24-26, and (d) is from Phil. 2:14-16. In continuing to develop the U2 theme of this lesson, it seems right to mention that this same passage is in U2's song "Drowning Man" on the *War* album: "Rise up, rise up; with wings like eagles. You'll run, you'll run; you'll run and not grow weary."

5. The fall of Satan is spoken of in different places in Scripture. The passage in Isaiah that some scholars consider on point is (c), which is Isaiah 14:12-15. (a) Comes from Revelation 12:9, (b) comes from Luke 10:18, and (d) comes from Ezekiel 28:12-19.



6. This answer is found in the last question. Isaiah 14:12-15 begins, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!" If we remember that Jerome translated the Bible into the Latin of his day in the 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, it helps us understand this answer. Jerome's Latin for "Day Star" was from two Latin words: *lux* ("light") and *feres* ("bearer"). From these two words, came the name "Lucifer." We should add that the Hebrew word (*hyyll*) can mean either the "Day Star" (a/k/a the "Morning Star") or the "shining one" or "one bearing light." In Revelation 22:16, Jesus is called the Morning Star. That is a good example of how Scriptures need to be read in context and we should never take one passage and bootstrap it blindly to another that might have the same word!

7. (b) Handel's *Messiah* draws many of its most famous lyrics from the book of Isaiah. The *Messiah* is a three-part oratorio, with each part divided into scenes. Part One, scene one begins with Isaiah 40:1-5:

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*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God; speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.*

*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

*Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low; the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.*

*And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Handel returns again and again to Isaiah, using lyrics from Isaiah 7:14; 40:9; 60:1-3; 9:2, 6; 35:5, 6; 40:11 in Part One. Part Two uses lyrics from Isaiah 53:6; 50:6; and 53:4-6, 8. The final Part is the only one that does not use Isaiah.

8. (b) is the correct answer. At least I should add that I have never read a scholar call Isaiah “The Hebrew Revelation.” I just made that up! Scholars called Isaiah “The Fifth Gospel” or even “The Gospel of Isaiah” because it tells the story of Jesus so clearly. Quotes from Isaiah tell the story of John the Baptist (Isa. 7:14, Mt. 1:23) and the birth of Jesus (Is. 7:14, Mt. 1:23). Isaiah explained Jesus’s ministry both in purpose (Is. 61:1-2) and in style (parables – Is. 6:9-10, Mt. 13:14-15, Mk. 4:12, etc.). Isaiah also sets out the redemptive work of Christ as the Suffering Servant/Savior in Is. 52:13-53:12.

Old Testament scholar, and Isaiah Commentary writer John Watts said,

The Book of Isaiah is the Mount Rushmore of biblical prophecy. Sculpted on its massive slopes are the major themes of Scripture: who God is, what he has done for his people, and how he expects them to serve him.<sup>5</sup>

John Sawyer entitled his book on Isaiah, “The Fifth Gospel.”<sup>6</sup>

“Proto-Isaiah,” “Deutero-Isaiah,” and “Trito-Isaiah” are labels that many scholars use to divide the 66 chapters of Isaiah into three different sections (1-39; 40-55; and 56-66). There is not unanimous agreement on the divisions, especially the divisions between Second Isaiah (another name for “Deutero-Isaiah”) and Third Isaiah (“Trito-Isaiah”). Those who use these terms typically believe that the entire

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<sup>5</sup> Watts, John D. W., *Isaiah: Word Biblical Commentary*, (Word 1989), at ix.

<sup>6</sup> Sawyer, John F., *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge 1996).

book is not the work of the prophet Isaiah, Son of Amoz. Noting differences in structure and vocabulary, as well as prophetic comments on the Babylonian Captivity, which did not happen during the life of Isaiah, these scholars believe that a school of Isaiah, or subsequent writers/prophets who kept the Isaiah prophecy alive, added to the book. Those scholars who believe in a united Isaiah, are quick to point out that prophecy is able to speak accurately into the future when guided by the Spirit of God.

9. (c) Contains the Isaiah 22:13 quote from Sunday Bloody Sunday, “We eat and drink for tomorrow we die.” This same passage is used by Paul in a brilliant way in 1 Corinthians 15:32, “If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.’”

10. (a) *White as Snow* is the right answer. The title and idea of the song comes from Isaiah 1:18:

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are like crimson, they shall become like wool.

The song lyrics seize not only the Isaiah image, but also Revelation’s tying the image to Jesus as the saints are noted to be in robes “made white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14), asking “Who can forgive? Forgiveness where forgiveness is not? Only the Lamb as white as snow.” The song echoes other passages from Isaiah as it begins “Where I came from there were no hills at all. The land was flat, the highways straight and wide.” This describes the landscape image of the famous Isaiah 40:3-5 passage that the New Testament applies to the ministry of John the Baptist:

A voice cries, “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

It is then that “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.”

This song is a “Double dose of Isaiah” because the melody is a take off from the Advent carol, “Oh Come, Oh Come, *Immanuel*.” Of course it is in Isaiah that we are told,

Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*.

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(Immanuel means “God with us”.)

11. (a) is the correct answer. Isaiah’s vision in chapter 6 is markedly similar to that of John as related in Revelation 4:

At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne in heaven, with one seated on the throne...And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind... and the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’

A comparison of Isaiah 60 and 65 to Revelation 21 and 22 also demonstrates remarkable similarities that help us understand both Isaiah and Revelation. Many of the images in Revelation find their roots in Isaiah.

12. The passage Jesus read is (b), “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...” Jesus knew and taught that he was the Messianic promised one from Isaiah. His hometown people were not ready to receive him as such, indeed few were until the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2). But with the coming of the Spirit, the message resonated upon ears all around the world. By the time the New Testament draws to a close, there is not a corner of the Roman Empire that has not heard the message with fruit!

13. (a) is a song from Isaiah 12:1-6. Isaiah is filled with verses and songs. They are one reason people often urge the study of Isaiah in chunks. The passages range in date of composition considerably. The book is not written like a novel with a plot from beginning to end!

14. (c) is the right answer. He used it to explain that those who refused to accept the gospel were without excuse. They were blinded, even though they saw; they were deaf, even though they could hear!

15. (a). Paul used Isaiah 65:1 in Romans 10:20 to help explain his ministry to the Gentiles. Paul quoted extensively from Isaiah and used it to help understand (and explain) the idea of a remnant in Romans 9-11. But the gospel was not simply for the remnant Jews. While the Jews received the gospel first, the gospel then went

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out to the Gentiles. This, Paul explained, was the import of Isaiah's word in Isaiah 6:9-10.

16. (d) *All Along the Watchtower* was written and recorded by Dylan, although made more famous by Jimi Hendrix. The song's lyrics and melody convey a mystical storyline with images from Isaiah 21 and Isaiah 61:5:

In the song, Dylan leaves you hanging with two riders approaching, adding only the ominous, "The wind begins to howl..." The Isaiah chapter tells us the message of the two riders to the watchtower, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground." This is a strong social statement typical of Dylan in the '60's when he penned this song. Dylan was pointing out the false idolatry in the midst of apparent power in his day. Hmmm....

17. During the civil war, Julia Ward Howe took a campfire melody and added very direct words about the state of America. We call the resulting song *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. The first verse of that song uses words and images from Isaiah 63. The song begins,

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*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;*

*He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:  
His truth is marching on!*

Isaiah 63 begins with the coming of the Lord “splendid in his apparel” and “marching in the greatness of his strength.” He comes “speaking in righteousness” and “mighty to save.” Noticeably his garments are red. Verses 3-6 tell why:

“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. I looked, but there was no one to help; I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold; so my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. I trampled down the peoples in my anger; I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

Glory Hallelujah indeed!

## **POINTS FOR HOME**

This week we do our Points for Home a bit differently. In the introduction we spoke of the Jewish liturgical usage of the prophets in services. The Prophetic reading (the “*haftorah*”) would follow a reading from the first five Biblical books (the “*Torah*.”) This practice dates back further than our knowledge of how it started. This week our Points for Home will come from the *haftorah* that is read after the first six chapters in Genesis. The concluding *haftorah* is from Isaiah 42:5ff

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it: "I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Hertz, at 21.

This is a noteworthy tie-in to the Genesis account. The Genesis chapters cover not only the sin and fall of man, but also the true wickedness and violence that followed. This prophetic verse sets out God as the Creator, and contrasts God's good creation to the condition that people fell into with their sin. Creator God called people in righteousness. He further indicates that those he called, he will work with in a mission to bring restoration.

The Christian immediately sees these prophetic verses from Isaiah as exemplars that show the mission and work of Christ. Fulfilling the prophetic word, Jesus is the hand of the Father who opens blind eyes, is a light to the nations and becomes the new covenant for the people. He is the one who brings people from the prison of darkness into the light of God. Jesus himself alludes to this passage and several similar ones in Isaiah when quizzed by John the Baptist (through his messengers) whether he was "the one to come." Jesus replied that the eyes of the blind were gaining sight, lame were walking, deaf were hearing, lepers were cleansed, and good news was being preached to the poor. Over and over John applies the Isaiah refrain about the light of the world to Jesus. John also sets Jesus as the light that brings people out of darkness.

So where are our points from home?

1. Be called out of sin. It is not what we were created for! God extends his hand to take us from sin and darkness and hold us in his light. "I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness." Hold his hand and walk in the light!
2. Grasp the Lord's hand. The prophet declared the Lord's words; "I will take you by the hand and keep you." This is touching, comforting, and powerful, all at once! Absorb this!
3. This is the week we celebrate Thanksgiving. Give thanks to the Lord for his loving kindness and his redemption!

### **WANT MORE?**

Thanksgiving week is a time to count blessings! Do not let a day go by without stopping to verbally thank the Lord for things in your life. Make it a point to thank him for big things, but also for little things. Think of the things you often take for granted and remember that they are from the Lord. Thank him for them!

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Meanwhile, if you are at a crisis place where you could use prayer, please email me at [wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com](mailto:wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com). Many of you have given me a chance to pray with you through the wonders of the Internet, a 21<sup>st</sup> century prayer link! I will keep your email confidential and be honored to pray for you.

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