

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 51

Theme: Israel's origin from past history; Israel's outlook for the future;

**Michael Fronczak
564 Schaeffer Dr.
Coldwater, Michigan 49036**

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Chapter 51

THEME: Israel's origin from past history; Israel's outlook for the future; outline of Israel's present conditions

It is impossible to read this chapter without realizing that God has a future purpose for the nation Israel -- just as He has a future purpose for the church and for you and me. Let me remind you that the final verse of chapter 50 concluded with a warning, which might lead you to an amillennialist interpretation. God doesn't want us to hold the view that Israel as a nation has been set aside permanently and that when He speaks of Israel, He means the church. My friend, when God says Israel, He means Israel. If He had meant the church instead of Israel, somewhere along the line He would have said, "I hope you understand that when I say Israel I mean the church." No, He makes it very clear that He means Israel. Just as Israel has had a past rooted in a very small beginning, just so today they are small and set aside. But this does not mean God has forsaken them.

To illustrate this I use the figure of a train. God is running through the world a twofold program: One of them is expressed in the words, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Ps. 2:6) -- that train will be coming through later, but now it is on the side-track. On the main track He is "...bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10), which refers to believers (or the church). When this train has come into the Union Station one time, God will put back on the main track the program of Israel and the gentile nations which are then upon the earth. And He is going to bring that train through on time also.

God's time piece is not B-U-L-O-V-A or G-R-U-E-N, but I-S-R-A-E-L. In this chapter God turns on the alarm to awaken those who are asleep that they might know that the eternal morning is coming soon. In Romans 13:11-12 we read, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."¹

Abraham our pattern to trust in Christ; in his promises, and righteous salvation: this is constant, but men are transitory, Isa 51:1-8. A prayer of the godly in affliction, Isa 51:9-11. The Lord's answer, Isa 51:12-16. He bewaileth Jerusalem, Isa 51:17-20. The bitter cup taken from her, and given to her enemies, Isa 51:21-23.²

¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

² Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible.

[Six calls alternated with comfort] Six calls alternated with comfort:³

1. Hearken -- call to the righteous. Comfort -- Zion restored (Isa. 51:1-3).
2. Hearken -- call to Israel. Comfort -- eternal salvation (Isa. 51:4-6).
3. Hearken -- call to the righteous. Comfort -- eternal justice (Isa. 51:7-8).
4. Awake -- call to God. Comfort -- restoration (Isa. 51:9-16).
5. Awake -- call to Jerusalem. Comfort -- enemies judged (Isa. 51:17-23).
6. Awake -- call to Zion. Comfort -- restoration (Isa. 52:1-12).

This section of Isaiah, like the preceding one, reflects on the third Servant Song (50:4-9). Here the emphasis is on the expectations of those who will listen to the Servant, as well as encouragement for those who are followers of righteousness. From this point through 52:12, the Servant theme builds to its climax in 52:13—53:12.

God directed His people three times, in verses 1-8, to listen. They should listen and look back, to remember what He had done (vv. 1-3). They should listen and look up, to remember who God is (vv. 4-6). And they should listen and not fear, to remember what God had promised (vv. 7-8).⁴

¹Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

Know your Jewish or Hebrew roots.

Two characteristics of the righteous:

1. They follow after righteousness.
2. They seek the Lord.

[rock whence ye are hewn] Abraham and Sarah are called the rock from which Israel was hewn (Isa. 51:1-2).

[the hole of the pit whence ye are digged] The picture is that of a rock being taken from a quarry. The idea is that the God who had made Israel a great people was able to restore and comfort them, and make of them a great people again. The God who had caused Abraham and Sarah to bring them into existence, through a miracle, could also cause them to flourish again as a great nation (Isa. 51:1-2).⁵

"Hearken to me," is God turning on the alarm. This is a call to every sincere heart in Israel that longs to be righteous and desires to know God. He says, "Wake up! Hear Me! I have a plan."⁶

³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁴ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness: The LORD here speaks to His people; but His people have had trouble listening to Him. So three times in this chapter, the exhortation is given: Listen to Me.⁷

1-2 The faithful remnant may have felt alone because they were few. But God reminded them of their ancestors, the source of their spiritual heritage—Abraham and Sarah. Abraham was only one person, but much came from his faithfulness. If the faithful few would remain faithful, even more could come from them. If we Christians, even a faithful few, remain faithful, think what God can do through us!⁸

1-3 Here the Lord is speaking to those who pursue righteousness (cf. Matt. 5:6) and seek Him. The believing remnant in Israel is to think back on their background. The rock from which they were cut, figuratively speaking, is explained in verse 2 as Abraham and Sarah, the "founders" of the nation. God made him many, that is, gave the patriarch many descendants as He had promised (Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:6; 22:17). For many years Abraham and Sarah had no children, but they believed God (Gen. 15:6). These people too are to believe Him. Though they have not yet seen the fruition of God's promises about Israel being a nation in the land (Gen. 15:18-21) they do have His sure word that God's kingdom will be established on the earth. Because of the Lord's compassion (cf. Isa. 49:10, 15) the land will someday be fruitful like Eden... the garden of the Lord. Because of this, joy (cf. 51:11) will abound among the remnant.⁹

Look to the rock from which you were hewn ... Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you: God counsels His people to look at His work in His people in days past. This is one of the great glories of God's Word to us; it tells us how God has dealt with His people, and gives us faith and guidance for His work in our lives - if we will listen to Him.

As Isaiah speaks to them here, God's people were in a discouraged place. They felt defeated, and the prophet tells them to look to God's work in and through His people in days past.

"Once a Christian gets eaten up with discouragement and unbelief it takes a great deal to shake him out of it. Those two emotions are the masterstrokes of Satan. So long as the child of God maintains an attitude of praise and trust in the Lord, then he is invincible. Once the devil gets him discouraged, that poor man is really going to take a knocking!" (Redpath)¹⁰

1-3 The first incentive (cf. note on vv. 1-8) is that, if God could make a great nation from one barren couple (Abraham and Sarah), then he can revive barren Zion as a joyful new Eden. This encouragement is intended not for all, but for you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the Lord.¹¹

⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

⁸ Life Application Study Bible.

⁹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

¹⁰ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

¹¹ ESV Study Bible

²Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

“Him alone” as one.

[called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him] God called him when he was but one - alone -- and He increased him to be a great nation.¹²

God is saying, "I called Abraham when he was over in Chaldea in idolatry, and look what I've done through him! Now I want to move in your heart and life."¹³

For I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him: Abraham was one man, from one simple family. Yet God called him alone, and increased him. This should remind His people today that God does not need many people to do a great work. He can bless and increase one man alone. Isaiah wanted God's people - in view here are the returning exiles from Babylon, and those of Israel's ultimate regathering - to not be discouraged of their small numbers, but realize that just as He did great things with Abraham and Sarah, He can do great things through them.

Remembering Abraham and Sarah should give them hope for this promise: For the LORD will comfort Zion ... He will make her wilderness like Eden ... Joy and gladness will be found in it. The promise seems too good to be true, but by faithfully remembering God's work in people like Abraham and Sarah, they would have the faith to believe God's promise to them today.

This shows how we can benefit through God's work in the lives of others. When we hear of what God has done and is doing in the lives of others, it can build our faith for God's work in our own lives.¹⁴

As Sarah gave birth to Isaac after a long period of barrenness, so Zion, a second Sarah, will be surrounded by a joyous multitude of children after a long period of desolation.

In Babylon, these future captives will be released to return after 70 years. But they will be discouraged by their small number and distance from their homeland. God reminds them of their ancestors Abraham and Sarah. Just one man, far from the Promised Land. But God was faithful to him and his wife, and they became a great nation. The Jews would once again be blessed, along with their land. Though Judea lay in ruins after the Babylonian invasion, the Lord would once again restore it beautifully.¹⁵

³For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

“Eden” - Gen 13:10; Joel 2:3; Ezek 28:13; 29:8,9,16,18. Cf. Rev 5:8; 14:2; 15:2.¹⁶

¹² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

¹³ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹⁴ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

¹⁵ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5101.php>

¹⁶ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, k-house.org

[comfort all her waste places] Not only will Zion, the city of David, and Jerusalem be comforted -- all the waste places of all the land ruled by Judah and the Messiah will be comforted and blossom as a rose, like the garden of Eden. Such passages have never been fulfilled; they remain to be fulfilled in the Millennium under the Messiah (Isa. 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 35:1-10).

[garden of the LORD] Gen. 2:8-17; 13:10.¹⁷

Creation, Freedom—God’s freedom often extends to those who are in the depths of despair. He can and often chooses to extend His grace to those who are suffering, even though they may be reaping the result of their own sinful ways. He creates new opportunities and delivers them in new ways. In His freedom, God acts in ways that seem strange to us. He does so to call His erring creation back to Himself.¹⁸

He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD reminds us that though these promises had a near fulfillment in the return from Babylon's captivity, their ultimate fulfillment is in a regathered, blessed, and saved Israel in the millennium.¹⁹

⁴Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

'Teaching,' Heb "torah." Cf. Isa. 2:3.

[my people ... my nation] "My people" and "My nation" could only refer to Judah and all Israel in Judah, for the ten-tribe kingdom was totally destroyed and taken captive at this time (Isa. 52:4). To Judah God promised a law and a judgment that would proceed from Him and be a light for them.

Ten Things That Belong to God

1. My people (Isa. 51:4; 52:4-6)
2. My nation (Isa. 51:4)
3. My judgment
4. My righteousness (Isa. 51:5,6,8)
5. My salvation
6. My arms (Isa. 51:5,9)
7. My words (Isa. 51:16)
8. My hand
9. My fury (Isa. 51:22)
10. My name (Isa. 52:5-6)

[law shall proceed from me] The law of Moses and other laws that God will see fit to add in the Millennium will be the civil and religious code for natural man (Isa. 2:3; 8:16,20; Ezek. 45:17, note).²⁰

¹⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

¹⁸ Disciples Study Bible

¹⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

²⁰ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

"O my nation" is Israel. This is a word of glorious anticipation for them.

4-8 God's Law will be known (cf. 2:3) and justice and righteousness (see comments on 1:21) will be established for the nations and the islands (see comments on 41:1) by His arm (i.e., His power; cf. 51:9 and see comments on 40:10). The heavens and the earth will pass away (vanish like smoke and wear out like a garment; cf. Heb. 1:11), but the Lord's work (salvation) and standards (righteousness) will continue forever (Isa. 51:8). Therefore, knowing this fact, the remnant with God's Law (v. 4) within them and eternal hope before them, should take courage and not be disheartened by their enemies' insults (cf. vv. 12-13; also note the Suffering Servant's response in 50:6). Those enemies will perish like a moth-eaten garment, a metaphor the Servant used earlier (50:9).²¹

I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples: When the LORD ultimately regathers, blesses, and saves Israel, He will also shine forth His justice to all the world - to Israel (My nation) and to all the nations (the peoples).²²

Again the Lord urged His nation to listen attentively to Him (cf. v. 1). What God would do for His people, in preserving them and returning them to the land, would be a lesson (Heb. torah, instruction, "law") to the whole world. His justice in fulfilling His promises to the Israelites would lead many of the Gentiles out of their darkness and into His light. This is what Isaiah revealed earlier that Messiah the Servant would do (9:7; 11:4; 16:4-5; 42:1-4; 49:6).²³

⁵My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

[righteousness is near] God's righteousness is the right-doing that He demands of men in any particular age.

[salvation is gone forth] God's salvation is the universal and complete deliverance from every part of the curse for all people who will conform to His will.

[isles] Maritime countries (Isa. 51:5; 42:4; 60:9).

[shall they trust] All Gentiles as well as Jews will trust in God eventually (Mt. 12:21; Acts 15:13-18; Rom. 15:12).²⁴

"My righteousness is near" -- righteousness is Christ. He is made unto us "righteousness."

"The isles" are all the continents which are inhabited by the human family. God says, "I have a salvation which I will send out to them."

"On mine arm shall they trust" -- the arm of God, as we shall see in Isaiah 53, is His salvation.

The question is asked, "to whom is the [bared] arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isa. 53:1). God wants that bared arm of redemption in Christ to be revealed to the lost world. Therefore He is sending out this message that this bared arm will deliver Israel in the future.²⁵

²¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

²² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

²³ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

²⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

The righteousness, salvation, and strong judgment that the Lord promised to bring would be greater than just Israel's emancipation from Babylon, however, because the nations would anticipate it. Cyrus brought deliverance to the Israelites from Babylon, but the Servant would bring salvation to the nations of the world. The furthest reaches of humanity wait expectantly for God's delivering power, in the sense that everyone wants someone to correct the mess we are in, not that they know how salvation will come. This salvation was imminent, the Lord promised, as imminent as Messiah's appearing.²⁶

Ever since chapter 42 began, God has been telling about the coming of His Servant. This is the One with the Spirit upon Him Who would bring forth justice to the nations (42:1-3). This is the Servant Whose mouth is like a sharp sword (49:2), Whose ministry was to bring the Jews back to God (49:5), to be a light of the nations (49:6). He would be despised at His first coming, but princes will bow down to Him at His second coming (49:7). He would be a covenant of the people and would restore the land of Israel (49:8), setting the captives free (49:8). He can sustain the weary with a word (50:4), and would suffer horrible torture and humiliation (50:6).

God is now telling the Jews again that His Servant will come. He will be the law and He will be justice. He will be a light of the nations. He will be God's righteousness, and He will be God's salvation. When will this happen? They will be able to tell just by looking at the earth and sky as it undergoes terrible tribulation.²⁷

“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

Cf. Isa 13:13; Mt 24:35; 2 Pet 3:10-12; Ps 102:26; Isa 24:19-20; Heb 1:10-12.

“Earth-dweller” excludes you as a Christian. We are pilgrims.

New Heaven, Earth: Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1.²⁸

[look upon the earth beneath] Four look's in Isa. 51;

1. Look to the rock whence you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence you are digged (Isa. 51:1).
2. Look to Abraham and Sarah (Isa. 51:2).
3. Look to the heavens (Isa. 51:6).
4. Look to the earth beneath.

²⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁷ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5101.php>

²⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, k-house.org

[for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished]

Three Great Comparisons

1. The heavens shall vanish away like smoke.
2. The earth shall wax old like a garment.
3. Men on earth shall die in like manner: but My salvation shall be forever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.

The whole creation, in comparison with the eternity and incorruptibility of the salvation and righteousness of God, will wax old, vanish, and die. The idea is the same as that expressed by Jesus Christ when He said heaven and earth shall pass away (be changed), but "My words shall not pass away" (see Pass Away). The atmospheric heavens or the clouds will vanish away like smoke, as clouds come and go; the earth will wax old like a garment; and men will pass from this life to another one -- but there will never be the slightest change in salvation and righteousness. Salvation will always be the same and accomplish the same in all ages in all men; and righteousness will always be right (Isa. 51:6; Heb. 1:10-12, notes). It would be easier for material creations to change than for right to become wrong, and salvation not to bring deliverance.²⁹

Creation, Hope³⁰—The earth which God created is not His ultimate handiwork. This material dwelling place, as we know it, will some day be destroyed. It is already now in the process of dying. Even the heavens shall dissolve some day and be created anew. The only eternal things are those of the spirit, values related to God's unalterable principles. Our hope for the future is rooted in God's righteousness and the justice that proceeds from it. He creates that hope as we are properly related to Him.

For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment: These are references to phenomenon surrounding the Second Coming of Jesus (Matthew 24:35, 2 Peter 3:7-10, Revelation 6:12-17). This is ultimately when the justice of the LORD will be displayed to Israel and all nations.

The judgment of the LORD isn't only evident in creation, but in the man also: Those who dwell in it will die in like manner.

But My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not be abolished: Those tied to the earth, not heaven will be cast away, and even the earth will vanish away. But never the righteousness or salvation of God. They remain, and are more permanent than even the heavens and the earth. We don't have to be afraid that God will change His character (My righteousness) or His mind about us (My salvation). This is something to listen to!³¹

²⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

³⁰ Disciples Study Bible

³¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

⁷Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

[ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law] Two experiences of the righteous:

1. They know righteousness.
2. They have God's law in the heart.

[fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings] Two warnings to the righteous:

1. Not to fear reproach of men.
2. Not to be afraid of their revilings.³²

Isaiah encouraged those who follow God's laws. He gave them hope when they faced people's reproach or insults because of their faith. We need not fear when people insult us for our faith because God is with us and truth will prevail. If people make fun of you or dislike you because you believe in God, remember that they are not against you personally but against God. God will deal with them; you should concentrate on loving and obeying him.³³

Listen to Me ... Do not fear the reproach of men: Knowing the permanence of the righteousness and salvation of the LORD, and the passing nature of the wicked (For the moth will eat them up like a garment), we should listen to God, and not be afraid of men.

I cannot imagine a true man saying, 'I love Christ, but I do not want others to know that I love him, lest they should laugh at me.' That is a reason to be laughed at, or rather, to be wept over. Afraid of being laughed at? Oh sir, this is indeed a cowardly fear!" (Charles Spurgeon, *The Secret of Love to God*)

"Yet you are a coward. Yes, put it down in English: you are a coward. If anybody called you so you would turn red in the face; and perhaps you are not a coward in reference to any other subject. What a shameful thing it is that while you are bold about everything else you are cowardly about Jesus Christ. Brave for the world and cowardly towards Christ!" (Charles Spurgeon, *Cheer for the Worker, and Hope for London*)³⁴

⁸For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Two reason not to fear men:

1. They are so weak and temporary compared to God whom men should fear; they soon pass away like garments eaten by worms and moths.
2. In contrast with perishable men, God's salvation and righteousness (right-doing) are eternal and will outlast the generations of men (p. Job 4:18-20).³⁵

³² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

³³ Life Application Study Bible.

³⁴ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

³⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

But My righteousness will be forever, and My salvation from generation to generation: Knowing that the righteousness and salvation of the LORD are permanent and the opposition and mocking of the wicked is temporary, we should stand strong in faith. This is something to listen to!³⁶

⁹Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?

First of three references to “Awake, Awake” (51:9; 51:17; 52:1).

“Rahab” - Proud one - Egypt (Ps 87:4; 89:10).

“Sea monster” - leviathan (Job).³⁷

[put on strength] Here Israel called on the Lord to awake and put on strength as in ancient days when He supernaturally delivered Israel from extermination. In desperation their request took the form of a command to God, as He had told them to do (Isa. 45:11). Then they asked about the miracles of the exodus (Isa. 51:9-10), and concluded that since He delivered in those days He would rescue them again, return them to Zion, and restore them as an eternal nation under their Messiah (Isa. 51:11-16).

[arm of the LORD] The arm of the Lord is figurative of His power (Isa. 51:5,9; 40:10; 52:10; 53:1; 59:16; 62:8; 63:5,12; Ex. 6:6; 15:16). To the people it had seemed to slumber for many years, so they now called upon it to awake.

[Rahab] Rahab is the poetic name of Egypt in Isa. 51:9; Ps. 87:4; 89:10. Elsewhere it refers to Rahab the harlot of Jericho (Josh. 2:1-3; 6:17-25; Heb. 11:21; Jas. 2:25; cp. Mt. 1:5).

[dragon] Hebrew: tanniyn (HSN-<H8577>), crocodile (see note b, Ex. 7:9; Israel's Enemies Pictured As Beasts; and Seven-Headed, Ten-Horned Beast).³⁸

Awake implies that the Lord appeared to be asleep (40:27; Ps. 44:23). The Lord's strength at creation in subduing the sea is the subject of Ps. 93. Isaiah's prayer is based on God's promise (50:2), and poetically addressed to God's strong arm (41:10; 51:5). Rahab was a mythical serpent that resisted God's creation of the universe (see Job 7:12; Ps. 74:13, 14). This imagery, possibly borrowed from Canaanite myths, also represents the Lord's defeat of Egypt—the nation that resisted the creation of Israel (30:7). The language here associates the Lord's creative work in the first Exodus and in the second Exodus (the return of the exiles) with His creative act of transforming the chaos of Gen. 1:2 into the cosmos of Gen. 2:1.³⁹

Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Here, the faithful believer calls out to the LORD, looking to Him for salvation. They know of God's great works in the past (Awake as in ancient days), but ask God to act on their behalf now.

Curiously, though it is - rightfully - phrased this way, it is really more of a wake up call to faith for the believer than an attempt to wake up God. Psalm 121:4 reminds us, Behold, He who

³⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

³⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, k-house.org

³⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

³⁹ Nelsons Study Bible

keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. Yet it is still wonderful for the believer to call upon the LORD this way, because it awakens our faith!

Are You not the arm that cut Rahab apart, and wounded the serpent? Among God's great works remembered is His defeat of Rahab. But when did God cut Rahab apart, and wound a serpent? The name Rahab means pride, and ever since the Garden of Eden, the serpent has been associated with Satan (Genesis 3:1-6). This speaks in poetic terms of God's victory over Satan, as it does also in Psalm 89:10.⁴⁰

Awake, awake. The discouraged people of God think of him as asleep. As in v. 17 and 52:1, the double imperative intensifies the urgency of the appeal. as in days of old. I.e., the days of the exodus. Was it not you . . . ? The helpless people wonder if God is as active as he once was. Rahab is Egypt (cf. 30:7). The ancient oppressor nation is perceived as a monster of mythic evil, slain by the power of God.⁴¹

Arm of the Lord: Arm of the LORD is a phrase that is used exclusively to refer to the Messiah. The metaphor is used in no other context, It is plain in verse 10 that the "Arm of the Lord" is not the nation. They did not dry up the Red Sea and lead them across on dry ground. The Arm of the Lord is the personage that has been present in all this and is promised to lead them again back to Zion. This picture of the mystic pillar of fire and cloud is here personified. The Psalms place the Messiah in the events of Sinai. This verse does the same. Interestingly enough this phrase is only used 2 times in the O.T. both times by Isaiah, here and in 53:1 where the "arm of the LORD" is called "he." (The phrase shows up in one other verse in the NIV translation in 59:1 but is an error due to the loose method of translation adopted by NIV scholars, Isaiah is careful to use a different metaphor there since it is not a messianic reference. The actual construction there is "yad YHWH" (the LORD's hand) not "zeroah YHWH" (arm of the LORD) The phrase was recognized as one referring to the person of Jesus by John in his Gospel (12:38) where he quotes Isa 53:1. His application is that although Jesus had done so many miraculous signs the unbelief of the Jews was the fulfillment of prophecies of Isaiah. See also Isaiah 59:16 which is a messianic reference using "his arm." Compare also 40:10 which is probably the first use of this metaphor and especially 48:14 where the arm of the LORD is the one who was present in the creation and was sent by YHWH and His Spirit. See also the note on verse 5 above.⁴²

9-10 God had performed many powerful miracles in founding Israel, perhaps none more exciting than making a dry path through the middle of the Red Sea (see Exodus 14). Our God is the same God who made that road through the sea. His methods may change, but his love and care do not.⁴³

9-11 These verses could be taken as a prayer of the righteous remnant (though some scholars say they record the prophet's words as he reflected on what would happen to that remnant). The plea is that God in His power (arm; cf. v. 5) would rise again (Awake; cf. v. 17) and save His people as He did in the Exodus (as in the days gone by). The question Was it not you? (vv. 9-10) was a way of affirming that the Lord did these things for their forefathers. (On Rahab, a mythical sea monster representing Egypt, see comments on 30:7.) When Israel escaped from Egypt the

⁴⁰ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

⁴¹ ESV Study Bible

⁴² <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa50-52.htm>

⁴³ Life Application Study Bible.

Egyptian army was drowned in the sea. The Israelites crossed over the Red (Reed) Sea on dry ground (Ex. 14:21-31). In the same way the Lord by His strength will allow Israel to return in a new "Exodus" to her homeland (Zion) with joy (cf. Isa. 51:3).⁴⁴

¹⁰Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

Cf. Isa 63:11-13; Ex. 14:16-22

¹¹Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

This is another promise with both a near and an ultimate fulfillment.

"Zion" is a geographical location (in Jerusalem) on earth. We need to understand that God means what He says here.⁴⁵

¹²I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;

“Grass” - Isa 40:6-7; Jas 1:10.⁴⁶

A hard question to answer: Why is it so easy for man to trust in man and fear him who is so weak and temporary, instead of trusting and fearing God who is all powerful and eternal? He has commanded man not to fear man or trust in his weakness; and He has promised to protect and bless everyone who will obey and trust Him (Isa. 51:12-13).⁴⁷

Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die: With promises this glorious, and a God this mighty, we have no reason to fear man. Man can never undo God's plan for our lives. Compared to the great power of God, they are like grass.⁴⁸

12-16 God's people feared Babylon but not God. They had reason to fear Babylon for the harm it wanted to do, but they should also have realized that God's power is much greater than Babylon's. Babylon was interested in making the people captives; God was interested in setting them free. The people had misplaced their fear and their love. Jerusalem should have feared God's power and loved his mercy.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁴⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁴⁶ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, k-house.org

⁴⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁴⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

⁴⁹ Life Application Study Bible.

12-16 The Lord now spoke to the remnant that was living in fear of destruction. He gave comfort reminding them that the ones they feared were only men (like grass; cf. 40:6-8) and that God is the all-powerful Creator (cf. 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18; 48:13; 51:16). The imprisoned remnant would soon be freed to return to the Promised Land in another "Exodus" (v. 14) because the Lord, the Creator God (vv. 15-16) is their God. He is intimate with them and protects them with His hand because they belong to Him in a unique relationship as His people (cf. Hosea 2:1, 23).⁵⁰

13 **And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?**

14 **The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.**

Three concerns of a prisoner:

1. That he may be liberated.
2. That he not die in prison.
3. That he does not starve while in prison.⁵¹

The captive is anxious: This is an appeal to the nature of suffering. Those who are exercised thereby have an advanced desire for it to be over but unfortunately trials and anxious periods are not always short lived. The appeal here is given so that the sufferer will know that the time is extended but the resulting glory in the future is sure. But is it human nature to be anxious and those who lack faith give up. Don't give up, the promises of God will be realized in due time just as the former promises which seemed so remotely in the future were reached and are now in the past so those promises due to those now living have the same assurance of a completion of the things God has promised.⁵²

15 **But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name.**

Just as God brought their father Abraham from the ends of the earth, God intends to bring Israel back to the land. This is what the prophet Jeremiah is saying: "But, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer. 23:8). The day will come when Israel will no longer remember the deliverance out of Egypt, so great will be their deliverance in the future. My friend, this is tremendous! You can't just set it aside and ignore it. God is saying, "Wake up! This is what I'm going to do."⁵³

⁵⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁵¹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵² <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa50-52.htm>

⁵³ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

15–16 I am the Lord your God . . . You are my people. God's covenant with his people defines both him and them. I have put my words in your mouth. This is the language by which God describes a prophet (cf. Deut. 18:18; Jer. 1:9). Here God speaks to his messianic servant, through whom he keeps his covenant.⁵⁴

16 **And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.**

[Thou art my people] This is definitely a prediction for the Millennium when Israel will become converted under the Messiah (Isa. 52:7; 59:20-21; 66:7-8; Zech. 12:10 -- Zech. 13:1; Mt. 23:37-39; Rom. 11:25-29).⁵⁵

The phrase I have covered you with the shadow of My hand reminds us of how God covered Moses with His hand, as Moses hid in the rock and the LORD made His glory to pass before Moses (Exodus 33:17-23).

The LORD would shelter and protect His people the same way. Nothing comes to us unless it has first passed through His counsel. "Ask the question again, 'Where is the fury of the oppressor?' And the answer comes, it is under the control of God. Even Satan, your fiercest foe, - God created him, God governs him, God can do with him just as he pleases. Then as to that poverty of which you are afraid, it will not come unless God permits it; and if it does come, the Lord can alleviate it." (Spurgeon)⁵⁶

17 **Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out.**

Second of three: "Awake, awake" (51:9; 51:17; 52:1).⁵⁷

[which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD] Here Israel is pictured as having drunk the cup of the Lord's wrath to the full (Isa. 51:17-20); but they will no longer drink of it because it will be given into the hands of their enemies that they may partake of it as punishment for overstepping their charge in chastening Israel (Isa. 51:21-23).

[wrung them out] Sucked all the liquid from the dregs and imbibed to the full.⁵⁸

All you have to do is look at Jerusalem today. It is a city in turmoil. I have no desire right now to stay there permanently, although it was a favorite spot of David, and it is also God's favorite spot on earth. But God has yet to make it beautiful. He has yet to bring His people there. God is saying, "Wake up, O Jerusalem. I am going to make you a great city."⁵⁹

⁵⁴ ESV Study Bible

⁵⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁵⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

⁵⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, k-house.org

⁵⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁵⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Jerusalem was God's holy city, the city with God's Temple. But the people of Judah experienced ruin instead of prosperity, destruction instead of liberty. Because of their sins, the people suffered. But God promised to restore Jerusalem as a holy city where sinners cannot enter. God reigns. Put your entire faith and confidence in his ability to control the course of history—and your life.⁶⁰

Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem: This wake up call is directed right at Jerusalem. God's people sometimes spiritually "fall asleep" and need to be awakened. Romans 13:11-12 says, And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD, the cup of His fury: A common picture of judgment in the Old Testament is the cup of God's wrath or fury. The idea is that God gives a cup "full" of His wrath to those who are under judgment, and they must drink it. Here, God calls Jerusalem to remember that they have drunk at the hand of the LORD, the cup of His fury when they experienced God's judgment through the Babylonians.

If possible, the image is even strengthened: You have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, and drained it out. Not only did Jerusalem drink the cup, they drained it - drinking down to the dregs at the bottom of the cup. They had experienced desolation and destruction, famine and sword, and this was God's cup for them.

This powerful image was in the mind of Jesus when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night before His crucifixion. When He prayed, Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done (Luke 22:42), He had in mind the cup of God's wrath He was about to drink - to the dregs - at the cross.

See, I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of My fury; you shall no longer drink it: The LORD knows when to give the cup, and when to take it from His people. Now is time for their redemption and for the shame of their enemies, so the LORD promises, I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you. We should always be awake to God's timing and loving promises.

"When faith is weak men are in a dreadful hurry, but strong faith does not judge the Lord to be slack concerning his promise. As God achieves his purpose with infinite leisure, he loves a faith that is patient and looks not for its reward this day or the next. 'He that believeth shall not make haste': that is to say, he shall not be ashamed or confounded by present trials so as to rush upon unbelieving actions. Faith leaves times and seasons with God to whom they belong." (Spurgeon)⁶¹

17-23 The remnant (or the prophet) had asked God to awaken (be alert; cf. v. 9) and do something. Now God asked Jerusalem to be awake (cf. 52:1) because He is doing something—their calamity was coming to an end. In their exile the Jerusalemites had drunk (i.e., experienced; cf. v. 21) God's wrath fully—all the way to the bottom of the cup (cf. v. 22). In the terrible destruction of Jerusalem many young men (sons) had died (v. 18). Ruin... destruction, famine, and sword spoke of the awful plight of the city (v. 19). The destruction was so terrible that the city experienced double calamities. Young men, objects of God's wrath, had been killed (cf. v. 20) in Jerusalem's streets.

⁶⁰ Life Application Study Bible.

⁶¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-51.cfm?a=730001

However, the Lord pronounced that the time of judgment was over (v. 22). Now the judgment, again pictured as a cup to be drunk, would be given to her tormentors who had walked on the dead bodies in Jerusalem (v. 23). The Babylonians, who had destroyed Jerusalem, would in turn suffer God's wrath.⁶²

Wake yourself, wake yourself. In v. 9, the people think God needs to be awakened to action; but in reality, they need to wake themselves. It was God, not their Babylonian captors, who force-fed Jerusalem the cup of wrath (cf. Ps. 75:8; Rev. 16:19). Now God invites his people to rise up from their stupor of despair.⁶³

***18*There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up.**

Leaders fled - Jer 43:5-7.

No son on earth to guide and help Israel, but there is one Son in heaven who was crucified for trying to help them. He will be the only one in the future who can and will help them -- when they repent and accept Him as their Savior -- at the second coming (Isa. 51:18-20; 63:1-6; Zech. 14; Mt. 23:37-39; 24:29-31; 25:31-46; Rom. 11:25-29; 2Th. 1:7-10; Rev. 19:11-21). Israel will then be gathered and blessed under Him eternally (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:10-12; 66:19-21; Ezek. 37; Zech. 14; Mt. 24:29-31; 25:31-45).⁶⁴

***19*These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?**

[desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword] These four terms are used repeatedly by God in predicting judgment and captivity upon Israel (Jer. 11:22; 14:12-18; 15:2; 16:4; 18:21; 21:7-9; 24:10; 27:8-13; 29:17-18; 32:24,36; Ezek. 6:11-12).

[by whom shall I comfort thee] God promised to comfort Judah and Jerusalem (Isa. 40:1; 51:3), but the question was, by whom? No ordinary son of Israel had been able to comfort them thus far. They were soon to go into Babylonian captivity and no son of Israel could stop such defeat. They were to faint and be trapped like a wild bull in a net (Isa. 51:18-20). They were powerless in themselves to provide a deliverer; only God could provide a way of comfort and restoration. This He did in sending the Messiah -- His only Son and a descendant of Abraham and David, according to the flesh. He was to redeem and deliver the nation and restore them to their own land, an eternal and a righteous people (Isa. 7:14; 9:6,7; Mic. 5:1,2; Mt. 1; Jn. 1:14; 3:16; Rom. 1:1-5,16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-8; Col. 1:15-18).⁶⁵

⁶² The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

⁶³ ESV Study Bible

⁶⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁶⁵ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

20 Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God.

21 Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine:

[drunken, but not with wine] Wrath on Judah

Judah and Jerusalem are pictured here as staggering, reeling, and falling down like a drunkard, but not with wine. They had drunk the cup of the Lord's wrath and the dregs of the cup trembling (Isa. 51:17). This wrath had brought desolation, destruction, famine, and sword upon the whole nation (Isa. 51:19). They had fainted at the head of every street and were like a wild bull caught in a net which it was trying to tear in order to free itself. The entire nation was full of God's fury and rebuke (Isa. 51:20; Lam. 4:4-5).

God now assured this afflicted and prostrate nation that He Himself would plead their cause and take out of their hand the cup of trembling and the dregs of His fury; they would not drink it anymore. Instead, He would put the cup into the hands of their enemies, for them to drink (Isa. 51:21-23). This same idea is found in Jer. 25:15-29; 49:12; 51:7-10; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 23:31-33; Hab. 2:16.⁶⁶

22 Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again:

God has been pressing the cup of fury to their lips because of their rejection of Christ, but the day is coming when He will remove the cup. The day will come when God will take away judgment and bless them. How can you say that God is through with the nation Israel? Even poetic justice demands that after all these years of judgment upon the land and upon the people, God should bless them. God will get the victory, and that is what He is telling us here.⁶⁷

23 But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

The enemies of Israel will not escape the judgment of God. Every nation that has majored in anti-Semitism has fallen: Egypt, Persia, Rome, Spain, Belgium, and Germany. This chapter should alert the believers today that God will yet choose Israel, and that the events in the Near East indicate that we are fast approaching the end times although no specific prophecy is being fulfilled in this hour.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible:

⁶⁷ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶⁸ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

[that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over] This refers to the custom of Eastern conquerors putting their feet on the necks of their captured enemies and treading them in the dust (Josh. 10:24; Ps. 18:40). Some would even use them as stepping stones in victory ceremonies, step on them in mounting chariots and horses, or ride over them while they were prostrate on the ground.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible: