

Christ will suffer persecution." The same could happen to men who wanted to obey God even before Christ. Cf. Wisdom 2:12-20, especially the words of the wicked: "Simply to see him [the just man] is a hardship for us."

Now the prophet cries to God: Awake, arm of the Lord. It was you who cut Rahab to pieces, and pierced the monster through. Rahab was thought of as a mythical sea monster: cf. Job 26:12. The monster may be Rahab too, or may be another creature of fancy: cf. Psalm 89:10. It continues, reminding God that He had dried the Red Sea. So He can easily ransom Israel from exile. Gladness will overtake them.

God responds: "I, yes I, am He who comforts you, sons of man who last no longer than the grass, but forget Him who made you, who made the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. Prisoners who cringe will soon be free." We do not know if some of the exiles were actually in prison, or if this is merely Semitic exaggeration again. God says He is the one who churns up the sea, who set the heavens in place. The same God says to Zion: You are my people. So no need to fear.

Then the prophet seems to see Jerusalem in a sleep of helplessness before him. He cries out: Awake, Jerusalem. You have drunk to the dregs the cup of the Lord's wrath. But that is over now. Your sons fainted away like an antelope that struggled long against the net that caught him, but in vain. So they were drunk, but not on wine. God says: See, I have taken out of your hand the cup of wrath that made you stagger. I will give that cup to your enemies. You may walk over them as they lie prostrate. In the Near East, sometimes conquerors literally did walk or ride over the backs of the conquered.

End of Chapter 51



"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"
ISAIAH 61:1

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THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 51

AND HIS NAME
WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER,
PRINCE OF
PEACE.
ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah is called "The Book of Salvation." The name *Isaiah* means "the salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation." Isaiah is the first book containing the writings of the prophets of the Bible. And the author, Isaiah, who is called the Prince of Prophets, shines above all the other writers and prophets of Scripture. His mastery of the language, his rich and vast vocabulary, and his poetic skill have earned him the title, "Shakespeare of the Bible." He was educated, distinguished, and privileged, yet remained a deeply spiritual man. He was committed to obedience over the long haul of his 55-60 year ministry as a prophet of God. He was a true patriot who loved his country and his people. Strong tradition suggests that he died a martyr's death under the reign of King Manasseh by being placed within the hollow of a tree trunk and sawed in two.

Isaiah's calling as a prophet was primarily to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, urging the people to repent from their sins and return to God. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the Lord. Many of his prophecies predicted events that occurred in Isaiah's near future, yet at the same time they foretold the events of the distant future (such as the coming of the Messiah), and even some events still to come in the last days (such as the second coming of Christ).

In summary, the message of Isaiah is that salvation comes from God—not man. God alone is Savior, Ruler and King.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

Book of Isaiah

Summary of Chapter 51

More on Zion's Restoration. Chapter 51. Summary and Comments

God says: Listen to me, you who follow after what is right, i.e., morally right, in accordance with God's law. Look to the rock from which you were cut. God Himself is often called the Rock. But here the term means: you are descended from Abraham and Sarah. He assures them: God will comfort Zion. He will turn her deserts into a paradise like Eden. Joy and gladness will be in her.

Then again: "Listen my people, my nation. The teaching on what is right, law (<Torah>) will come from me, and God's justice (<mishpat>) will be a light to the nations. God promises to bring justice (<mishpat>) to the nations, that is, even the gentiles. It means they will come to know what is right even by revelation. Anthropology shows that primitive people in general have a rather good knowledge of the basic moral code in their consciences. St. Paul echoes this in Romans 2:14-16, where he says that the gentiles who do not have a revealed law, still do what the law calls for, since that requirement is written on their hearts. Of course it is an advantage to have it spelled out in writing, for what is in the hearts may be misunderstood or dimmed by sin. Again, the result of all this is very similar to what St. Paul will say clearly in Eph 3:6 that the gentiles are called to be part of the people of God. Paul says this call was not known to previous generations. That is true, for it was in the prophecies, but was not clear enough. Most Jews took these prophecies of all nations coming to Jerusalem as meaning all would become Jews. They did not yet grasp God's intent. (Please recall comments given on chapter 2 above).

Then: the heavens will vanish like smoke. We spoke of this before, it is apocalyptic language. It means not that this creation will be destroyed, but renewed. It goes on to say "Its inhabitants will die like flies." This probably does not mean there will be a large extermination of humans before the end. But Luke 18:8 says: "When the Son of Man comes, do you think He will find faith on the earth?" In other words, a great apostasy. 1 Thes 2. 3 also speaks of it. But no matter what happens, God says: His salvation (<yeshua) and my righteousness (sedaqah) will last forever. <Yeshua> does mean salvation. It may mean eternal salvation, or it may mean rescue from temporal dangers. <Sedaqah> means basically God's concern for what is morally right, but if people keep His covenant, then He has bound Himself to give favors to them, so <sedaqah> later develops the meaning of benefits. Cf. the appendix to Wm. Most, <The Thought of St. Paul>).

In verse 7 the thought of universality continues: "Hear me, you who <know> what is right, you people who have my law (<Torah>) in your hearts." <Know> here is the verb <yada>, which is much broader than English <know>. It means not only know with the mind, but also act with the will, by love/obedience. The next words speak of those who have his law in their hearts. Again we think of St. Paul, Romans 2:15: "They show the work of the law written on their hearts." (That in turn is taken right out of Jeremiah 31:33, the prophecy of the new covenant). So not only Israel can know God's will and obey it. Even the gentiles can know what is written in their hearts, and obey it. And many of them did better than did Israel, cf. The book of Jonah which shows gentiles responding to a prophet with open arms, and Ezek 3:5-7, plus the terrible words of Ezek 5:6: "She [Jerusalem] has changed my judgments into wickedness more than the gentiles." So those who obey the Lord should not be frightened at the insults they may meet. We think of 2 Timothy 3:12: "Anyone who wants to live devoutly in