



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ISAIAH 40-66

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

In the last volume, we noted that the book of Isaiah is divided into two parts. The first 35 chapters were written while Assyria was the dominant power in the Middle East. Then chapters 36 through 39 provide a historical bridge to the second part of Isaiah (chapters 40-66), with Babylon as the dominant political force.

Isaiah repeatedly refers to Israel as God's "servant"—a nation that had been called to a specific task, but had failed. Therefore, Israel was facing a national captivity at the hands of the Babylonians.

These later chapters make reference to Cyrus, the human king of Persia who would bring Israel back from their captivity. He is called God's "anointed," his "chosen ally," his "shepherd."

These latter chapters of Isaiah also speak of another "Servant." While Cyrus was called to redeem Israel from captivity, this Servant would redeem the whole world from the slavery of sin.

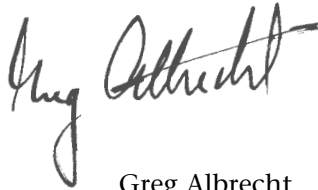
The ministry of this Servant is described and celebrated in a series of four songs. The first one of these, found in 42:1-7, describes the nature and work of the Servant. The second, in 49:1-7, reveals more aspects of his ministry—showing that his work will apply to the whole world. As we read the third and fourth of these Servant Songs (50:4-9 and 52:13-53:12), we learn that this Servant would redeem the world through his suffering.

Some seven centuries after this was written, the identity of this Suffering Servant was revealed. Jesus of Nazareth came as a fulfillment of these prophecies.

Yet this is not the end of the servant theme. In the last two

chapters, Isaiah uses the word “servants”—in the plural—eight times. These servants follow in the footsteps of the Suffering Servant Jesus. They are called by his name—“Christians”—and they do his work—helping bring about the redemption of the whole world.

These servants, of course, are you and me. Realizing that we were spoken of some 2,700 years ago in an ancient prophecy should give us added motivation to do the work of sharing the good news of the One we follow.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges.

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. The *CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

ISAIAH

40-66

The Coming
Messiah

Introduction to Isaiah 40-66

Setting and purpose: In these chapters, Isaiah moves from an emphasis on retribution to an emphasis on reconciliation and restoration. God's relationship with his people means that they will never, as a people, be completely abandoned. This section emphasizes restoration and deliverance. All these prophecies center around three events:

1. Israel's deliverance from captivity in Babylon (40-48).
2. The rejection and restoration of the Suffering Servant (49-57).
3. The restoration of Israel and the world (58-66).

Judah still had 100 years before she was finally conquered by Babylon and taken into exile for 70 years.

Reading outline: Capital letters correspond with daily readings.

I. DELIVERANCE! 40-48

- A. A Time for Comfort, 40:1-11
- B. Who Is Like the Lord? 40:12-31
- C. The Divine Bodyguard, 41:1-20
- D. Making Idol Conversation, 41:21-29
- E. The Coming Servant, 42
- F. When You Walk Through the Fire, 43
- G. Wooden Worship, 44
- H. Pagan Pawns, 45
- I. Lose the Heavy Baggage, 46
- J. Painting the Town Dead, 47
- K. Rebel Without a Cause, 48

II. THE SUFFERING SERVANT, 49-57

- A. The Servant's Reward, 49

- B. Suffering Without Retaliation, 50
- C. Chips Off The Old Block, 51
- D. The Best Is Yet To Come, 52
- E. The Man of Sorrows, 53
- F. City of the Future, 54
- G. The Eternal Thirst Quencher, 55
- H. Encouraging Foreign Immigration, 56
- I. Eating the Bread of Idolness, 57

III. FINAL RESTORATION, 58–66

- A. Getting the Skinny on Fasting, 58
- B. Separation Anxiety, 59
- C. The Empire of the SON, 60
- D. God's Renovation Project, 61
- E. What's In A Name? 62
- F. Grapes of Wrath, 63
- G. The Silent Treatment, 64
- H. Out With the Old, In With the New, 65
- I. Labor of Love, 66:1-16
- J. Sign Ahead! 66:17-24

*“The grass withers and the
flowers fall, because the breath
of the Lord blows on them.
Surely the people are grass. The
grass withers and the flowers
fall, but the word of our God
stands forever.”*

Isaiah 40:7-8



A Time for Comfort

DAY 1

Isaiah 40:1-11

When was the last time someone or something brought you comfort when you needed it most? What was it you found so comforting?

1. What three things did God want Isaiah to share with Jerusalem's inhabitants (vs. 1-2)?
2. What was the message from the voice in the wilderness (v. 3)? Where have you heard these words before—and to whom did they refer (Mt 3:3)?
3. How are the grass and flowers and the Word of God different (vs. 6-8)?
4. What good tidings were coming to Zion (v. 9)?
5. What do you think God wanted to convey to the people of Judah through the picture of God in verse 11?

1. When someone in the past has comforted or encouraged you, what approach did they use and why was it effective in helping you?
2. How do you rate yourself as a "comforter" of others? (a) I try, but I don't always succeed; (b) I try and I think I usually succeed; (c) I don't try very often, so I'm not sure; (d) I know I'm not good at it—so I don't usually try.
3. What things in your life cause you to need encouragement?

"Double for all her sins" (v. 2). *This does not mean Jerusalem should be punished more than her sins deserve. It was an idiom meaning that she has been sufficiently punished. Isaiah uses this phrase in 51:19 and 61:7 as well. "A voice of one calling in the desert"* (v. 3). *All the Gospel writers referred to this passage as prophetic of the ministry of John the Baptist, who would prepare the hearts of the people for the Lord (Mt 3:3).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Who Is Like the Lord?

Isaiah 40:12-31

OPENING
up to the Word

While not many of us bow down to literal idols, many people “worship” things other than God. What are some of those things?

DIGGING
into the Word

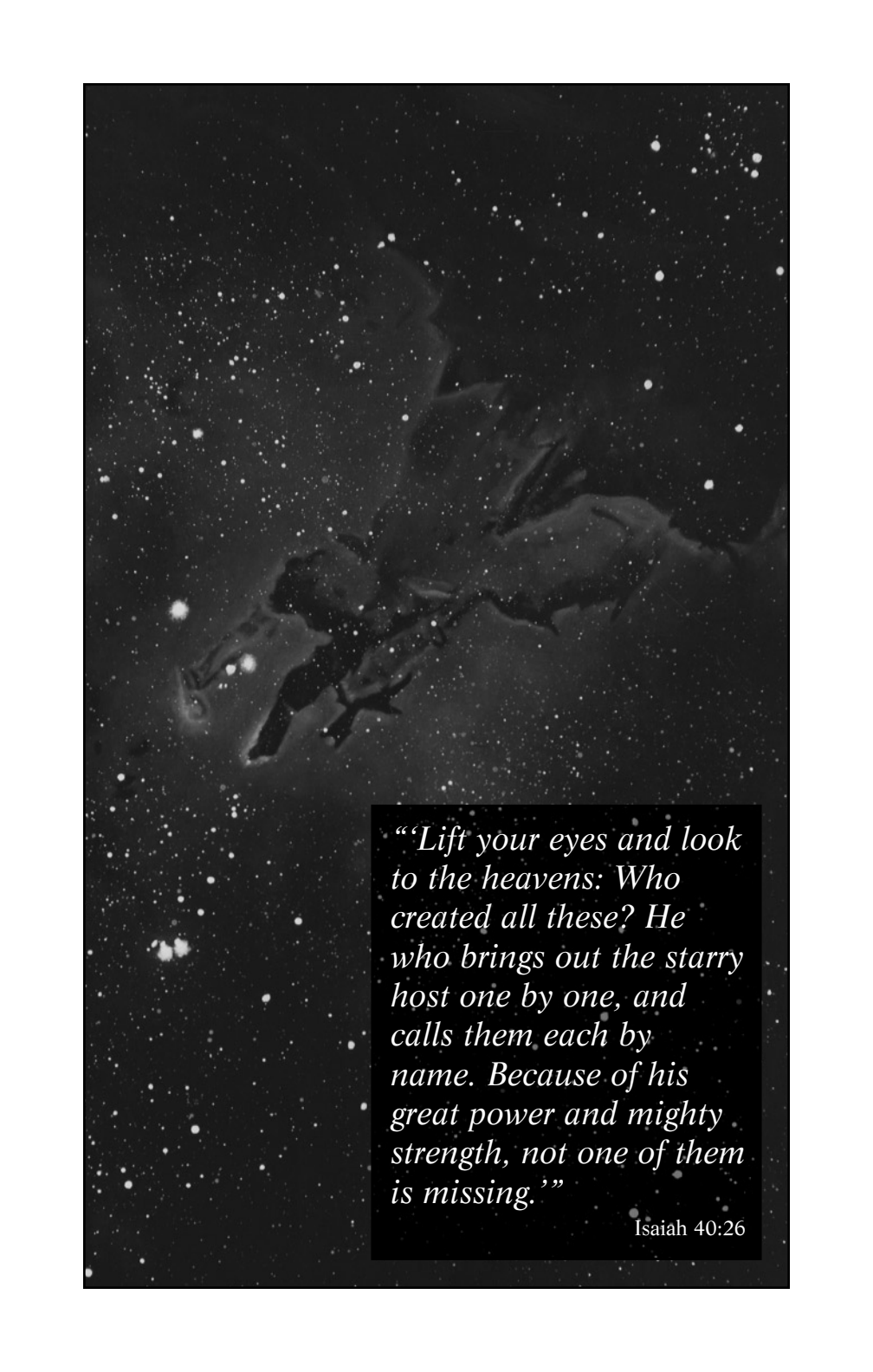
1. What are the five questions God asked of Judah to emphasize his glory over idols and all of creation (vs. 12-14)?
2. What do the answers to these five questions teach us about the nature of God?
3. How are all the nations described in comparison to God’s infinite power and being (vs. 15,17)?
4. Do the powers and rulers of this world and all their plans affect God (vs. 23-24)?
5. What comfort do all these truths about God give us (vs. 28-31)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Do you know people who worship gods other than the one true God? From what you’ve learned in this chapter, how are the gods of human origin inferior to God?
2. Has this section of Scripture encouraged you in your trust and faith in the nature of God?
3. What truth about God did you learn in this section that encouraged you?

WINDOW
on the Word

“Rulers of this world” (v. 23). God is said to establish the rulers in the world—they do not do it themselves, though they claim that they do. This would bring comfort to Judah both before and after Babylon took them into captivity.



“Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.’”

Isaiah 40:26

Attributes of the Messiah

The Old Testament prophets used a variety of descriptive words to illustrate the work, character and attributes of the Messiah. Below is only a partial listing.

Branch (<i>Isa 11:1; Zec 3:8</i>)	The Messiah who will come from the family of David to rule in righteousness. The military leader of His people.
Counselor (<i>Isa 9:6</i>)	The Messiah who will carry the government on His shoulders.
Desire of Nations (<i>Hag 2:7</i>)	The One to whom all nations will eventually come.
Everlasting Father (<i>Isa 9:6</i>)	The eternally compassionate One.
Cornerstone (<i>Isa 28:16</i>)	The One on whom we can safely build.
Fountain (<i>Zec 13:1</i>)	The One who removes sin and impurity.
Lawgiver (<i>Isa 33:22</i>)	The absolute standard of moral conduct.
Anointed One (<i>Dan 9:25-26</i>)	The appointed Deliverer.
Mighty God (<i>Isa 9:6</i>)	The powerful and sovereign Lord.
Purifier (<i>Mal 3:3</i>)	The One who cleans away that which hinders or destroys.
Redeemer (<i>Isa 59:20</i>)	The One who frees His people by paying a price.
Refiner (<i>Mal 3:3</i>)	The One who removes sin as fire refines gold.
Refuge (<i>Isa 25:4</i>)	The Person in whom one can find safety and protection.
Our Righteousness (<i>Jer 23:6</i>)	The One who is completely without sin and filled with absolute goodness.
Servant (<i>Isa 42:1</i>)	The faithful Son of God who does His Father's will.

The Divine Bodyguard

DAY 3

Isaiah 41:1-20

Have you ever seen a bodyguard in action? Who was he or she guarding and why did the person need protection?

1. What does the term “islands” refer to? How can an island be anything other than silent (vs. 1, 5-6)?

2. Who would God stir up from the east and hand nations over to (v. 2, see note below)? What would be unique about this invading king (v. 3)?

3. How would the nations try to protect themselves from this coming invasion (vs. 5-7)?

4. How did God reassure Judah that he will never ultimately forsake them (vs. 11-16)? When would this likely take place?

5. In what way would God transform the earth in the fullness of his kingdom (vs. 18-20)?

1. Which of the following best describes you? (a) I have never needed a bodyguard—I could be one, (b) I would never want a bodyguard, (c) several times a bodyguard would have come in very handy, (d) I need a bodyguard all the time.

2. In what area do you feel most vulnerable? Where could you use a protector the most?

3. Have you ever protected someone else? How did it feel to be able to protect someone from harm?

4. In what sense do you feel God is your “bodyguard” or protector?

“By a path his feet have not traveled before” (v. 3). *This description of a conqueror seems like Isaiah is pointing forward to **Cyrus of Persia**, who conquered Babylon and allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem. “**O worm Jacob, O little Israel**” (v. 14). *Though Israel was weak and little, God was strong for them. “**Rivers flow on barren heights**” (v. 18). Isaiah describes how God changes barren land to make it lush and beautiful.**

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 4

Making Idol Conversation

Isaiah 41:21-29

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever seen an idol or an image of a pagan god? What was it made out of and who made it?

DIGGING
into the Word

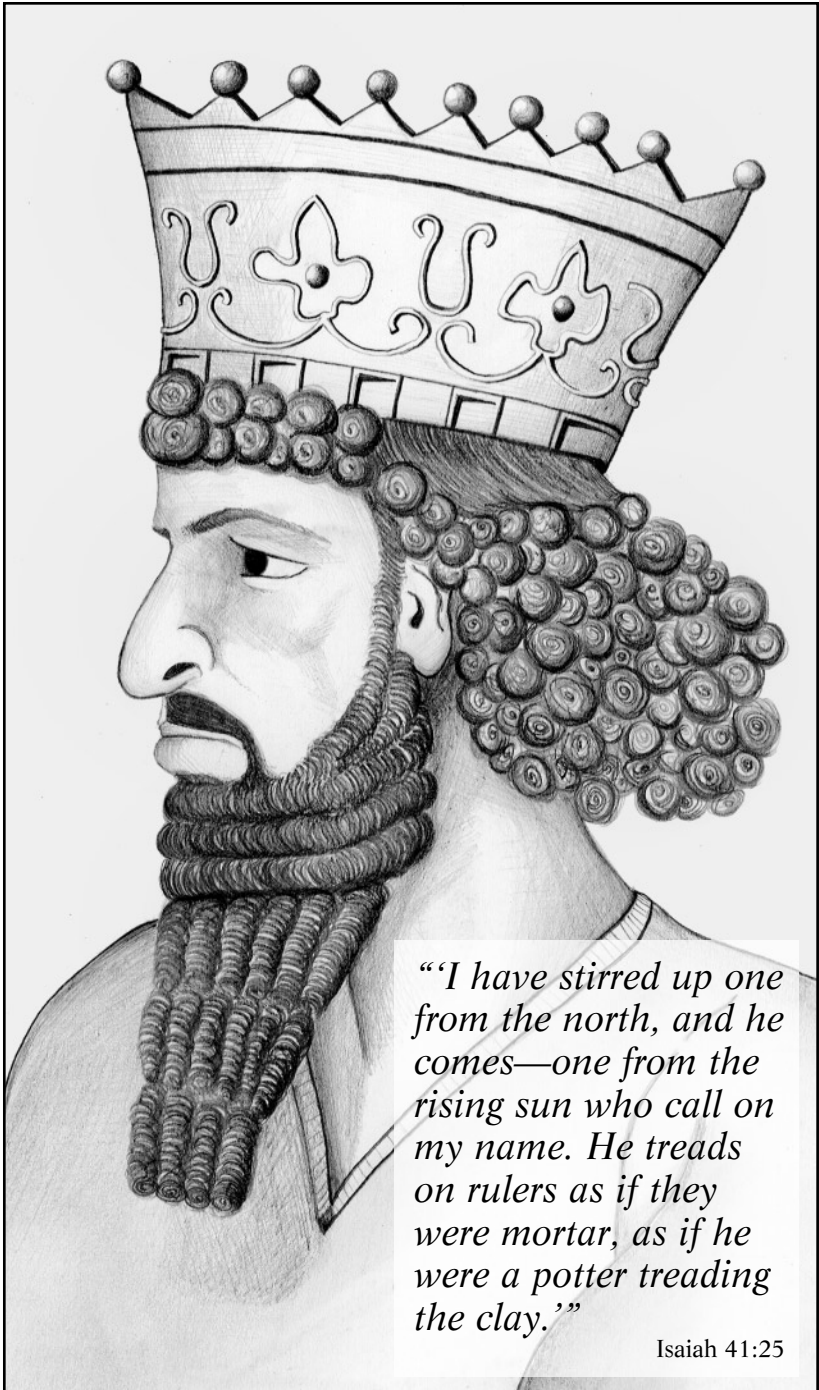
1. Using the illustration of a courtroom, what challenge does God give those who worship idols (vs. 21-23)?
 2. What was God's conclusion about the effectiveness of idols (v. 24)?
 3. What did God claim to have done (v. 25)?
 4. God demonstrates the uselessness of idols by pointing out that the idols failed to prophesy what (vs. 26-28)?
 5. What is the inevitable conclusion about the power of idols (v. 29)?
-

LIVING
out the Word

1. Can you think of a time when someone who spoke for a pagan god was able to accurately predict the future?
 2. How many prophecies given by God can you think of that have already been fulfilled?
-

WINDOW
on the Word

***"I have stirred one up from the north,...one from the rising sun"** (v. 25). God predicts that a strong ruler will arise from the north and from the east (the rising sun). **Cyrus of Persia** was east of Israel and he conquered Israel from the north. Who else could predict such a thing, God challenges.*



“I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes—one from the rising sun who call on my name. He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay.”

Isaiah 41:25

The Coming Servant

Isaiah 42

OPENING
up to the Word

When you talk to friends and relatives who don't know God, what is their great hope for the future? What things are they hoping will happen, and how far into the future are they looking?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who is the servant, the chosen one in whom God delights (v. 1)?
 2. What characteristics of this individual suggest that he is more than a man (vs. 2-4)?
 3. How do the descriptions in verses 6-7 seem to correspond to the Lord himself? Were these fulfilled by anyone other than Jesus (Mt 11:4-5)?
 4. What thing, that Israel ultimately rejected, did it "please the Lord" to do (vs. 21, 24)?
-

LIVING
out the Word

1. Write down the three things you hope for most in your future and why they are so important to you.
 2. How many of these can you accomplish on your own and for how many of them will you need God's help?
 3. How has the Lord Jesus fulfilled your hopes? Have you ever thanked him for this?
 4. Write a letter to God, thanking him for the way he has fulfilled some of your hopes and given you confidence that he will give yet more.
-

WINDOW
on the Word

"My servant" (v. 1). Some commentators feel this refers to Israel, but in light of the following descriptions it appears that the Messiah is being referred to. He is, of course, the only one who could "never falter or be discouraged till he established justice on earth."

The Spirit in the Old Testament

Isaiah 42:1 says: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.” Here are some examples of the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament.

The Spirit participated in creation.

The Spirit gives life to humans and the other creatures.

The Spirit strives with sinners, which is related to his work in convicting people of sin.

The Spirit came upon certain judges, warriors and prophets in a way that gave them extraordinary power: for example, Joshua, Othniel, Gideon, Samson and Saul.

The Spirit played a prominent role in Old Testament prophecy. David said “the Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue”(2Sa 23:2). In the same manner Ezekiel reported that “as he spoke, the Spirit came into me...” (Eze 2:2).

The Spirit inspired holiness in the believers of the Old Testament.

Looking forward to the ministry of Jesus Christ, Isaiah prophesied: “**The Spirit** of the Lord will rest on him” (Isa 11:2), inspiring God’s Chosen One with wisdom, understanding, might, counsel, knowledge, fear of the Lord, faithfulness and righteousness.

*“When you pass through
the waters, I will be with
you; and when you pass
through the rivers, they
will not sweep over you.
When you walk through
the fire, you will not be
burned; the flames will
not set you ablaze.”*

Isaiah 43:2



When You Walk Through the Fire

DAY 6

Isaiah 43

Have you ever gone through a terrible, “fiery” ordeal? How do you feel God helped you through it and in what way might he have protected you?

1. In what way did God promise to protect and deliver Israel (v. 2)? Did he promise to protect them *from* the fire or *through* the fire (Da 3)?
2. Where would God go in the future, in his mercy, to regather disobedient Israel (vs. 5-6)?
3. How did God plan to judge the Babylonians (v. 14)?
4. What “former things” should Judah forget because God planned to do an even better thing in the future (vs. 16-20)?
5. Though God has not burdened Judah, how had they burdened him (vs. 22-24)?

1. Why do you think God chooses at times to save us *through* fiery trials instead of *from* fiery trials (Jas 1:2-4)?
2. When God does a “new thing” (v. 19) do you think it is “new” to him or to us—or both?
3. Do you think God *causes* our trials or *allows* them? Why?

“I have summoned you by name” (v. 1). *As a shepherd knows each of his sheep by name, God shows his loving attention to Judah. “Bring my sons from afar”* (v. 6) *refers to Israel’s Babylonian exile, from which God would bring them back to their own land, but it may also suggest a future regathering. “See, I am doing a new thing”* (v. 19). *Comparing the exodus from Babylon to the exodus from Egypt, God tells Israel not to dwell on past rescues, but to hope in his future rescues for their sake.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

*“... who says of Cyrus,
“He is my shepherd and
will accomplish all that I
please; he will say of
Jerusalem, ‘Let it be
rebuilt,’ and of the
temple, ‘Let its
foundations be laid.’””*

Isaiah 44:28

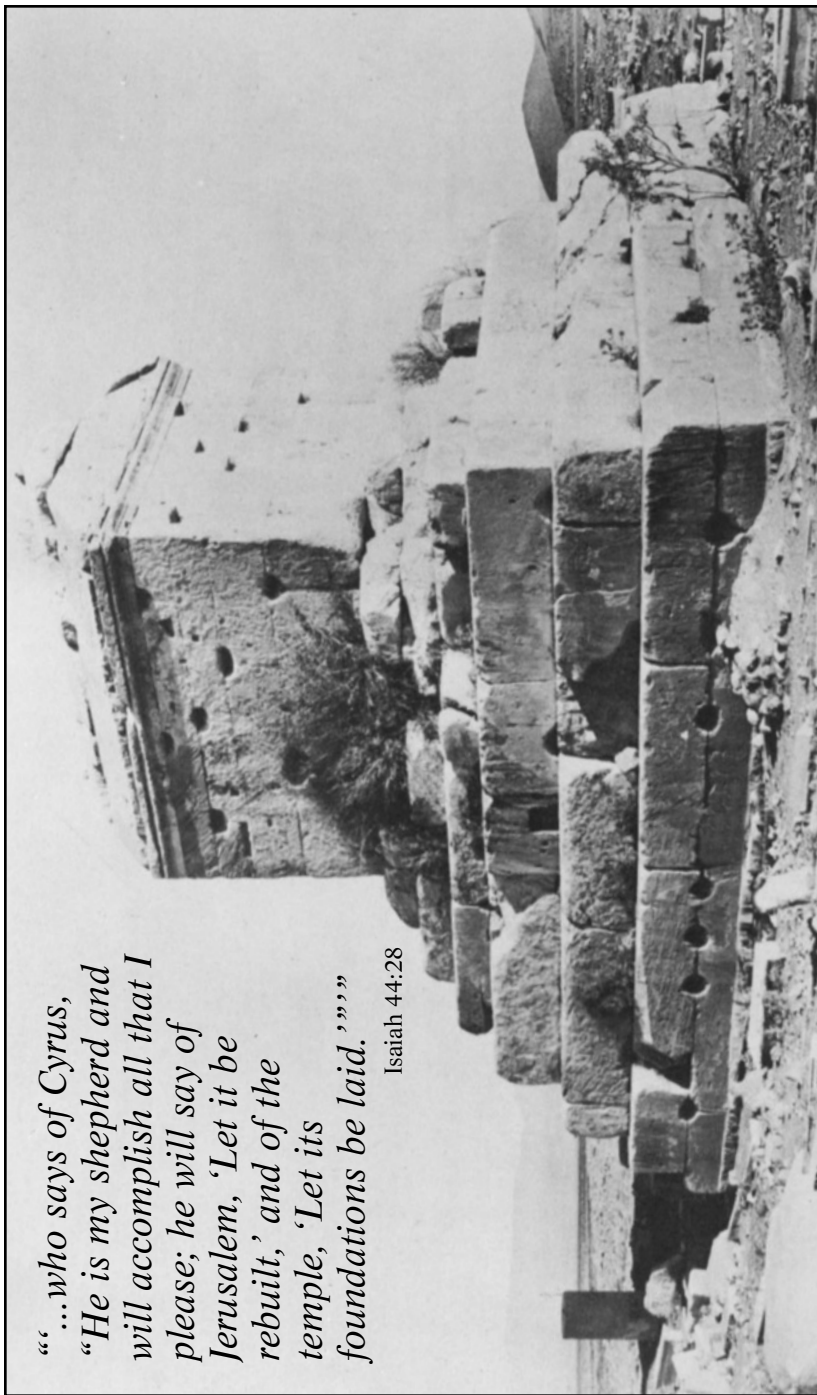


Photo of the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae, Iran courtesy of the Oriental Institute

Isaiah 44

At what point can a “passion” become an idol?
How can you tell when you are going from mere enjoyment of something to worship?

1. What does God seem to be saying in verse six?
(a) I’m the best God, (b) I should be your favorite God, (c) I am the only God, (d) I’m God if you believe I’m God.

2. What challenge did God give the idols many worshiped (v. 7)?

3. How did God ridicule the creation of an idol?
What makes idolatry so ridiculous (vs. 12-15)?

4. What does no one stop to think about when they make an idol (v. 19)?

5. How can Cyrus, a Persian king, be called a shepherd for God (v. 28)?

1. Assuming one definition of “worship” to be *giving extreme devotion to something*, is there any worship going on in your life?

2. If God commented on the gods of our day, what things do you think he would mention? Would he make the same observations he did in Isaiah 44?

Jeshurun (v. 2) means “the upright one” and refers to Israel. **“It shall be inhabited...I will restore them”** (v. 26). Although they would have their country destroyed, their capital city would be in ruins and they would be carried away into exile, God promises they will later return. In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and carried Judah into exile. In 539, **Cyrus**, founder of the Persian Empire, conquered Babylon. In 538 Cyrus issued a decree to allow the Jews to return and rebuild their city and Temple. In this way Cyrus served as God’s shepherd, bringing God’s sheep back home.

OPENING

up to the Word

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