

## **ISAIAH CHAPTER 49**

### **SALVATION REACHES TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH**

Ever feel like giving up? Do you think that after 70 years in captivity in a foreign land, people, specifically the Jews, would feel like giving up? God understood this, and we will find that much of Isaiah 49 is aimed at giving the people encouragement so that they would not give up.

Beginning in Isaiah 48, we saw how Israel had stubbornly resisted the true God, preferring to worship idols of their own creation instead. This blasphemy<sup>1</sup> forced God to defend His name by sending Israel into a “*furnace of affliction*” (Isaiah 48:1–11). Yet all this was leading up to yet another revelation of God’s grace. God gives them new hope in verses 12–16, expresses His longing for Israel in verses 17–19, and dramatically announces the good news of coming redemption in verses 20–22.

**Now in chapter 49 the true Servant of the Lord, the Messiah, Jesus, steps forward.**

He tells of His mission to Israel and to **all humanity** (verses 1–7). Jesus repeats the promises God made to Him and to Israel (verses 8–13). Israel may feel God has forsaken her, but God can no more abandon the Jews than a mother can forget the baby at her breast (verses 14–21). God will restore and exalt<sup>2</sup> His chosen people. He will punish their enemies, for God is the Savior and Redeemer of His people (verses 22–26).<sup>3</sup>

Now as you look at the first three verses in Isaiah 49, you may wonder how we can know that it is speaking of Jesus Christ. After all, verse three mentions Israel, not Christ. But if you know the life of Christ and the New Testament well, you see the definite descriptions of Christ. Verse 1 says, “*From the body of My mother He named me.*” And what do we read in Matthew?

**Matthew 1:20-21, NAS**

*20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*

*21 "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."*

Look at verse 3, “*You are My Servant in Whom I will show My glory.*” Now let’s compare that to some New Testament passages:

<sup>1</sup> The act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God .

<sup>2</sup> to raise in rank, power, or character.

<sup>3</sup> Richards, Larry: *The Bible Reader's Companion*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1991, S. 436

Mark 1:10-11, NAS

*10 And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;  
11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased."*

Mark 9:7, NAS

*Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"*

Matthew 12:18, NAS

*"Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.*

And now let's go back to verse 2: "*He has made My mouth like a sharp sword.*" Compare that with Revelation 19:11-16, NAS:

*11 And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.  
12 And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself.  
13 And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God.  
14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.  
15 And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.  
16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."*

These are definite descriptions of Christ. If we look at John 1:1, "*in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God*" and at the Revelation passage we just read, especially verses 13 and 16, we have clear evidence that this passage is describing Jesus Christ. This is extremely important to establish because many Jewish people believe that Isaiah 49 and Isaiah 53 refer only to the nation of Israel. When you are witnessing to a Jew, therefore, it will be important to remember this and to be able to show them how the passage explicitly is describing Christ.

The Servant, Jesus, addresses the nations that did not know Israel's God. The Gentiles, that is all the other people in the world, were "*far off*," (Isaiah 49:1; Ephesians 2:17) and only God's Servant (Jesus) could bring them near according to Ephesians 2:11-22 NLT:

*11 Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called*

*“uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts.*

*12 In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope.*

*13 But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.*

*14 For Christ himself has brought peace to us. **He united Jews and Gentiles into one** people when, in his own body on the cross, **he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us.***

Jesus gave His life to break down this wall but mankind over the centuries has made every possible effort to rebuild it.

***15 He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups.***

*16 **Together as one body,** Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.*

*17 He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles **who were far away from him,** and peace to the Jews who were near.*

***18 Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.***

*19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along **with all of God’s holy people. You are members of God’s family.***

*20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And **the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.***

*21 **We are carefully joined together in him,** becoming a holy temple for the Lord.*

***22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.***

Christ confirmed God’s promises to the Jews and also extended God’s grace to the Gentiles. You might also want to read Romans 15:8–12. In this message, **God’s Servant, Jesus**, explains His ministry as bringing light in the darkness (Isaiah 49:1–7), liberty to the captives (verses 8–13), and love and hope to the discouraged (Isaiah 49:14–50:3).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.: Be Comforted. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1992 (An

Isaiah 49:1-7 NAS:

1 Listen to Me, O islands, And pay attention, **you peoples from afar**. The Lord called Me from the womb; From the body of My mother He named Me.

2 He has made My mouth like a sharp sword, In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me; And He has also made Me a select arrow, He has hidden Me in His quiver.

3 He said to Me, “You are My Servant, Israel, In Whom I will show My glory.”

4 But I said, “I have toiled in vain, I have spent My strength for nothing and vanity; Yet surely the justice due to Me is with the Lord, And My reward with My God.”

5 And now says **the Lord, who formed Me from the womb** to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the Lord, And My God is My strength),

6 He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; **I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**”

7 Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, “Kings will see and arise, **Princes will also bow down**, Because of the Lord who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You.”

What right did God’s Servant have to address the Gentile nations with such authority? Verse 1 tells us that from before His birth, Jesus was called by God to His ministry (Jer. 1:5; Gal. 1:15); and God prepared Him like a sharp sword and a polished arrow (Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16). Messiah came as both a Servant and a Warrior, **serving those who trust Him and ultimately judging those who resist Him**.

All of God’s servants, including you and me, should be like prepared weapons. “*It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus,*” wrote Robert Murray McCheyne. “*A holy minister [servant] is an awful weapon in the hand of God.*”

The Jewish nation was called to glorify God and be a light to the Gentiles, but they failed in their mission. This is why Jesus is called “*Israel*” in Isaiah 49:3: **He did the work that Israel was supposed to do**. Today, the church is God’s light in this dark world,<sup>5</sup> and like Israel, we seem to be failing in our mission to take the Good News to the ends of the earth. We cannot do the job very effectively when only 5 percent of the average local church budget is devoted to evangelism.<sup>6</sup>

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Old Testament Study), S. Is 49:1

<sup>5</sup> Acts 13:46–49; Matt. 5:14–16.

<sup>6</sup> My estimation.

Verse 4 goes on to tell us that when Jesus Christ ministered on earth, especially to His own people Israel, there were times when His work seemed in vain (verse 4). The religious leaders opposed Him, the disciples did not always understand Him, and those He helped did not always thank Him. But He lived and labored by faith, and God gave Him success.

Our Lord could not minister to the Gentiles until first He ministered to the Jews according to verses 5–6. That was His mission.<sup>7</sup> When Jesus returned to Heaven, He left behind a believing remnant of Jews that carried on His work. We must never forget that John tells us in John 4:22: “salvation is of the Jews”.

The Bible is a Jewish book. The first believers and missionaries were Jews, and the Gentiles would not have heard the Gospel had it not been brought to them by Jews. And yet Jesus was despised by both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>8</sup>

God assured His Servant, Jesus, who was **despised and abhorred by** His people, that He would succeed in His ministry to the Gentiles. **Kings and princes** will bow down to Him because He has been **chosen by the LORD**. In His first coming Jesus Christ was rejected by His own people (John 1:10-11), but at His second coming, all will **bow** before Him (Phil. 2:10-11).<sup>9</sup>

Isaiah 49:8-13 NAS:

*8 Thus says the Lord, “In a favorable time I have answered You, And in a day of salvation I have helped You; And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people, To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages;*

*9 Saying to those who are bound, ‘Go forth,’ To those who are in darkness, ‘Show yourselves.’ Along the roads they will feed, And their pasture will be on all bare heights.*

*10 “They will not hunger or thirst, Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has compassion on them will lead them And will guide them to springs of water.*

*11 “I will make all My mountains a road, And My highways will be raised up.*

*12 “Behold, these will come from afar; And lo, these will come from the north and from the west, And these from the land of Sinim.”*

*13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! **For the Lord has comforted His people And will***

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 10:5–6; 15:24; Luke 24:44–49; Acts 3:25–26; 13:46–47; and Romans 1:16

<sup>8</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.: Be Comforted. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1992 (An Old Testament Study), S. Is 49:1

<sup>9</sup> Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 1:1103

**have compassion on His afflicted.**

*“The Lord comforts His people and will have compassion on His afflicted<sup>10</sup> ones”* (49:13). The people of God sing this song as they contemplate their future deliverance, but the people of the Captivity and those left in *“the desolate inheritances”* are not so happy. Instead of singing, they are complaining: *“The Lord has forsaken me. And my Lord has forgotten me”* (verse 14).

Not only is **God’s Servant, Jesus**, the *“new Israel,”* but He is also the *“new Moses”* in setting His people free. **Jesus Christ is God’s covenant** if you’ll remember. Perhaps you don’t remember or weren’t here when we studied Isaiah 42 a few weeks ago. So let’s look again at Isaiah 42:1-8 NLT:

1 *“Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, who pleases me. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will bring justice to the nations.*

2 *He will not shout or raise his voice in public.*

3 *He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to all who have been wronged.*

4 *He will not falter or lose heart until justice prevails throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction.”*

5 *God, the Lord, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath to everyone, life to everyone who walks the earth. And it is he who says,*

6 *“I, the Lord, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will take you by the hand and guard you, and I will give you to my people, Israel, as a symbol of my covenant with them. And you will be a light to guide the nations.*

7 *You will open the eyes of the blind. You will free the captives from prison, releasing those who sit in dark dungeons.*

8 *“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else, nor share my praise with carved idols.*

**A covenant by the way is a formal, solemn, and binding agreement for the performance of some action.** God says that Jesus Christ is a symbol of His covenant with believers. So if God’s Son, Jesus, is God’s covenant with His people, we can be sure that God will keep His promises. Moses led the nation out of bondage in Egypt, and God will lead His people out of Captivity in Babylon. He will also regather them from the four corners of the earth at the end of the Tribulation as the Millennium begins. Joshua led the people into their land after the 40 years of wandering in the desert so they could claim their inheritance, and God will bring the Israelites back to their land from captivity in Babylon as well *“to inherit the desolate heritages”* (Isaiah 49:8).

<sup>10</sup> to distress so severely as to cause persistent suffering or anguish.

How does this apply to the Gentiles? If God had not restored the people from the Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem, He could not have fulfilled His promises concerning the Messiah. You see God had already prophesied, that is predicted, through some of His prophets that Jesus would be born in Israel, accomplish His ministry there, and be crucified there. Had there been no Bethlehem, where would Jesus have been born? Had there been no Nazareth, where would He have grown up? Had there been no Jerusalem and no temple, where would He have taught, suffered, and died? And He did this for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews.<sup>11</sup>

In the Millennium, here in verse 8 called **the time of God's favor** and **the day of salvation**, the Lord will enable the Servant, Jesus, **to be a covenant for the people** (Isaiah 42:6), to fulfill God's covenant promises to Israel. For a more thorough understanding of God's marvelous plan and gift of grace, let's turn to Jeremiah 31:31-34 where God explains this **new covenant**:

*31 "The day is coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah.*

*32 This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the Lord.*

*33 "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the Lord. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

*34 And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the Lord.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already," says the Lord. "I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins."*

In addition to a new beginning God promised to **make a New Covenant with His people**. This New Covenant was specifically for **the house of Israel** (the Northern Kingdom) and **the house of Judah** (the Southern Kingdom). It would **not be like the covenant** God had **made with Israel's forefathers** at the time of the Exodus from Egypt because that covenant had been broken by the people (Jeremiah 11:1-8). The earlier covenant God referred to was the **Mosaic Covenant** contained in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Twice God had announced a series of punishments or "curses" that would be invoked on those who violated His Law.<sup>12</sup> The final judgment would be a physical deportation from the land of Israel. With the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. this final "curse" was completed. God had set a holy standard of conduct before the people, but because of their sinful hearts they could not keep those standards. However, because God is so forgiving, loving, and merciful He had already planned the

<sup>11</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.: Be Comforted. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1992 (An Old Testament Study), S. Is 49:1

<sup>12</sup> Lev. 26; Deut. 28

change that was needed.

God's New Covenant would involve an internalization of His Law. He would put His Law in their minds and on their hearts, not just on stone tablets (Ex. 34:1). There will be no need to exhort<sup>13</sup> people to know the LORD because they will already know God.<sup>14</sup> God's New Covenant will give Israel the inner ability to obey His righteous standards and thus to enjoy His blessings. How will this happen? Ezekiel indicated that this change will result from God's bestowal of the Holy Spirit on these believers.<sup>15</sup> In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit did not universally indwell all believers. The Holy Spirit did not live inside the hearts of all believers as He does today. Thus one different aspect of the New Covenant is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all believers.<sup>16</sup> If a Jew comes to know Christ as Savior today, He will also be given the Holy Spirit, the same as anyone else coming to such faith. But in the end times, at the end of the Tribulation, there will be a remnant of Jews who will come to faith as a nation, and at that time all who are left will be given the Holy Spirit.

A second aspect of the New Covenant will be God's provision for sin. The sins of the people resulted in the curses, or punishment, of the Old Covenant. However, as part of the New Covenant God will forgive Israel's wickedness and remember their sins no more. But how could a holy God overlook sin? The answer is that God did not "*overlook*" sin, its penalty was paid for by a Substitute.<sup>17</sup> In the Upper Room Christ announced that the New Covenant was to be inaugurated through the shedding of His blood.<sup>18</sup>

Forgiveness of sin would be part of the New Covenant only because God provided a Substitute to pay the penalty required of mankind.

To underscore Israel's permanence because of this New Covenant, God compared her existence to that of the heavens and the earth (Isaiah 49:13). As God had appointed **the sun to shine by day** and **the moon and stars to shine by night** (Gen. 1:14-19), so He had appointed Israel as His chosen nation. It would take a feat as fabulous as making **these natural signs vanish from nature** to make **Israel . . . cease to be a nation**. The power God displayed in creating the universe was the power that He exercises in preserving Israel as a nation.

Throughout history people have tried in vain to destroy the Jewish people, but none have succeeded, and none ever will.

<sup>13</sup> Make urgent appeals.

<sup>14</sup> Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14.

<sup>15</sup> Ezek. 36:24-32.

<sup>16</sup> Joel 2:28-32.

<sup>17</sup> Isa. 53:4-6.

<sup>18</sup> Matt. 26:27-28; Luke 22:20.

How is the Church related to the New Covenant? Is the New Covenant being fulfilled in the church today? Ultimately the New Covenant will find its complete fulfillment during the Millennium, Christ's thousand year reign upon the earth, when Israel is restored to her God. The New Covenant was made with Israel (Jer. 31:31, 33) just as the Mosaic Covenant had been (Jer. 31:32). One key element of the New Covenant is the preservation of Israel as a nation (Jeremiah 31: 35-37). However, though the ultimate fulfillment of this covenant awaits the millennial reign of Christ, the Church today is participating in some of the benefits of that covenant. **The covenant was inaugurated, that is it was activated, at Christ's death,**<sup>19</sup> and the Church, by her union with Christ, is sharing in many of the spiritual blessings promised to Israel,<sup>20</sup> including the New Covenant.<sup>21</sup> But though the Church's participation in the New Covenant is real, it is not the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise. The fact that believers today enjoy the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant (forgiveness of sins and the indwelling Holy Spirit) does *not* mean that spiritual *and* physical blessings will not be realized by Israel. That still awaits the day when Israel will acknowledge her sin and turn to the Messiah for forgiveness.<sup>22</sup> Listen to what Jesus says through the prophet, Zechariah.

Zechariah 12:10-13:1 NLT:

*10 "Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David<sup>23</sup> and on the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died.*

*11 The sorrow and mourning in Jerusalem on that day will be like the great mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddo.*

*12 "All Israel will mourn, each clan by itself, and with the husbands separate from their wives. The clan of David will mourn alone, as will the clan of Nathan,*

*13 the clan of Levi, and the clan of Shimei.*

*14 Each of the surviving clans from Judah will mourn separately, and with the husbands separate from their wives.*

*1 "On that day a fountain will be opened for the dynasty of David and for the people of Jerusalem, a fountain to cleanse them from all their sins and impurity.*

When **the land** is restored **the captives** will return to the Promised Land from various places around the world (Isa. 49:9, 12). The land will be fertile with **pasture** (verse 9) and **water** (verse 10) and **mountains** and **valleys** will be changed (verse 11). As in Isaiah 40:3,4, this may signify a change in the people's lives. The location of **Sinim** is

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 26:27-28; Luke 22:20.

<sup>20</sup> Rom. 11:11-27; Eph. 2:11-22.

<sup>21</sup> 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15; 12:22-24.

<sup>22</sup> Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 1:1171

<sup>23</sup> All of Israel.

uncertain, but many think it is the Aswan region of Egypt.<sup>24</sup>

God had prepared His chosen Servant, Jesus, from the womb to bring Israel back to Him and to “*bring my salvation*” (49:6) to all the world (49:1–7). The Servant then reviewed the promises God made to Him and to Israel. God would help his Servant in His mission of liberating Israel (49:8–9). He would gather the remnant of his people and give them comfort and prosperity (49:9–13).<sup>25</sup>

God then assures them of His love by comparing Himself to a compassionate **mother** (vv. 14–23), a courageous **warrior** (vv. 24–26), and a constant **lover** (50:1–3).

Isaiah 49:14-23 NAS:

*14 But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me.”*

*15 “Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.*

*16 “Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.*

*17 “Your builders hurry; Your destroyers and devastators Will depart from you.*

*18 “Lift up your eyes and look around; All of them gather together, they come to you. As I live,” declares the Lord, “You will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride.*

*19 “For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land— Surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants, And those who swallowed you will be far away.*

*20 “The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears, ‘The place is too cramped for me; Make room for me that I may live here.’*

*21 “Then you will say in your heart, ‘Who has begotten these for me, Since I have been bereaved of my children And am barren, an exile and a wanderer? And who has reared these? Behold, I was left alone; From where did these come?’ ”*

*22 Thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations And set up My standard to the peoples; And they will bring your sons in their bosom, And your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.*

*23 “Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth And lick the dust of your feet; And you will know that I am the Lord; Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.*

In these verses we see God portrayed as a **compassionate mother**. The Bible emphasizes the fatherhood of God, but there is also a **“motherhood”** side to God’s nature that we

<sup>24</sup> Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 1:1104

<sup>25</sup> Willmington, H. L.: Willmington's Bible Handbook. Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House Publishers, 1997, S. 371

must not forget. God is compassionate and comforts us as a mother comforts her children (66:13). Isaiah pictures Israel as a nursing child, totally dependent on the Lord who will never forget them or forsake them. The high priest bore the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders and over his heart (Ex. 28:6–9), engraved on jewels; but God has engraved His children’s names on His hands. The word “engraved” means “*to cut into*,” signifying its permanence. God can never forget Zion nor Zion’s children. This is a beautiful picture of the land of Israel during the Millennium when all believers will relocate and return there to rule the world.

Zion seems like a forsaken and barren mother, but she will be so blessed of God that there will be no room for her children! They will be like beautiful bridal ornaments, not decrepit refugees from Captivity. Once again, the prophet looked ahead to the end of the age when the Gentiles will honor Jehovah and Israel, and kings and queens will be baby-sitters for Israel’s children!

Isaiah 49:24-26 NAS:

24 *“Can the prey be taken from the mighty man, Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?”*

25 *Surely, thus says the Lord, “Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away, And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued; For I will contend with the one who contends with you, And I will save your sons.*

26 ***“I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; And all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”***

Here God is portrayed as **a courageous warrior**. The Babylonians were fierce warriors, but the Lord would snatch Israel from their grasp. In His compassion, He would set the captives free and see to it that Babylon would never afflict them again. The fact that God permitted Babylon to conquer His people did not mean that God was weak or unconcerned. When the right time comes, He will set His people free. *“They shall not be ashamed who wait for Me”* (verse 23).<sup>26</sup>

This thought continues on into the first three verses of Isaiah chapter 50.

Isaiah 50:1-3 NAS:

1 *Thus says the Lord, “Where is the certificate of divorce By which I have sent your mother away? Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you? Behold, you were sold for your iniquities, And for your transgressions your mother was sent away.*

2 *“Why was there no man when I came? When I called, why was there none to answer? Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink for lack of water And die of thirst.*

<sup>26</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.: Be Comforted. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1992 (An Old Testament Study), S. Is 49:1

3 *“I clothe the heavens with blackness And make sackcloth their covering.”*

In these verses God is seen as a **constant lover**. The image of **Israel as the wife of Jehovah** is found often in the prophets (54:4–5; 62:1–5; Jer. 2:1–3; 3:1–11; Hosea 2; Ezek. 16). **Israel was “married” to Jehovah when they accepted the covenant at Sinai** (Ex. 19–20), but they violated that covenant by *“playing the harlot”* and worshipping idols. *But God did not forsake His people even though they had been unfaithful to Him.*

The Mosaic permission for divorce is found in Deuteronomy 24:1–4 (also see Matt. 19:1–12). The *“certificate of divorce”* declared that the former marriage was broken and that the woman was free to remarry. But it also prevented the woman from returning to her former husband. God had indeed “divorced” the Northern Kingdom and allowed it to be assimilated by the Assyrians (Jer. 3:8), so she could not return. **But He had not “divorced” the Southern Kingdom;** He had only permitted His unfaithful wife to suffer chastening at the hands of Babylon. **He would forgive her and receive her back again.**

The second picture in this paragraph is that of a poor family selling their children into servitude (2 Kings 4:1–7; Neh. 5:1–5). God had not sold His people; by their sins, *they had sold themselves*. God had called to them many times and tried to turn them back from their wicked ways, but they had refused to listen. Judah did not go into exile because of God’s weakness, but because of their own sinfulness.

How could the people say they were forgotten and forsaken, when the Lord is a compassionate mother, a courageous warrior, and a constant lover? He is faithful to His Word even when we are unfaithful (2 Tim. 2:11–13). He is faithful to punish when we rebel (Heb. 12:1–11), but He is also faithful to forgive when we repent and confess (1 John 1:9).

The Servant’s message to the Gentiles was one of hope and blessing. He would deal with His people so that they, in turn, could bring God’s blessing to the Gentiles.<sup>27</sup> All of the apostles were Jews. Christ was a Jew. All the early converts to Christianity were Jews, and Paul was a Jew. Paul was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles and carried the message to various parts of the Roman Empire. Salvation for the Gentiles came through the Jews.

<sup>27</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.: *Be Comforted*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1992 (An Old Testament Study), S. Is 49:1