

LESSON NINE

[This Lesson includes an introduction to chapters 40-66]

Welcome to the second half of our study of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah! If you enjoyed Part One, you will also appreciate Part Two as much or even more. This Lesson takes up Chapters 40 and 41. Before starting that we will provide you with a brief introduction to Part Two of our study. There are some general differences between Chapters 1-39 and Chapters 40-66, which we will note. In addition we will introduce Babylon and Persia, who are important for the coming Lessons.

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO: CHAPTERS 40-66

A. Some Differences Between the Two Parts

1. Part One emphasized warnings against sin as well as the promise of restoration for God's faithful people. Part Two gives us vital information about God's surprising method for saving all humanity.
2. Part One included a lot of local political and social history. Part Two contains more teaching about the implication of God's deliverance for all mankind.
3. Part One dealt with the Assyrian attacks on Palestine. Part Two emphasizes the suffering of the Hebrew exiles in Babylon.
4. Both parts stress the need to worship God alone.
5. Both parts proclaim the good news that the Holy and Mighty God is also God our Saviour.
6. In Part One the name of the Prophet Isaiah is mentioned several times in the text. We have therefore often used his name in our Lessons. In Part Two, however, Isaiah's name is not used in the text. We therefore simply refer to him as "the Prophet" in our Lessons.

B. The Background for Part Two: Babylon and Persia

1. Babylon:

In Part Two Babylon becomes the main problem for the Hebrew people. Babylon was a region in what is now south-central Iraq. Before it became great itself it had two difficulties. The first was with Assyria to the north which had made Babylon its colony. The second difficulty came from tribal groups who disturbed Babylon with their incursions. To the east were the Medes from central Persia; to the west were the Aramaeans from Syria; and near to them were the Chaldean nomads. In 626 B.C. a Chaldean leader named Nabopolassar took charge of Babylon and established a new dynasty. As a result the two words Babylonian and Chaldean

merged in meaning. The new king's son and successor took the name Nebucadnezzar II. It was he who led the Babylonian expansion in the Middle East, succeeding Assyria in power, until it ended in 539 B.C.

In 598 B.C. King Nebucadnezzar invaded Palestine, and this time Jerusalem could not be saved. Solomon's great temple was destroyed, while the Judean king and many Hebrews from Judea were deported. The Babylonians returned again and again; twelve years later in 586 B.C. they took thousands more of the Hebrews into captivity in Babylon. In chapters 40-66 of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah the Prophet proclaims comfort to these exiles. He also foretells that their situation will change, and they will return. God will send a helper.

2. Persia:

The helper came from Persia. He was Cyrus II, the Persian leader who was called Cyrus the Great (d. 529 B.C.). In 1971 Iran celebrated the 2500th anniversary of his reign. He belonged to the southwestern corner of Iran, governing a small state about 100 miles from the Persian Gulf. However, he soon took over from the ruling Medes and began to extend his kingdom. Before he was finished this unusual man had created the Persian Empire, the world's largest at that time, which extended from Greece to the Indus River.

In the process of his expansion Cyrus overcame Babylon. The people in that city were very unhappy, and they regarded Cyrus and his forces as liberators. They walked in without a blow. In this way Cyrus also became the ruler of Palestine. This brought national salvation to the Hebrew exiles. Cyrus was remarkable in his attainments, somewhat like Akbar the Great. He was known not only for his military ability but also for his cultural interests and religious tolerance. The Greeks regarded him as the ideal ruler of the ancient world. At Babylon he found the Hebrews. In effect he said to them, "Why are you here?" and he sent them home. He even promised to give them some funds to help them rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. Some of the Judeans went in 538 B.C., others later, while a group remained in Babylon.

The Prophet's prophetic words look forward to that deliverance, and to another even greater salvation to come. That greater salvation will come through a loving Servant-Saviour who will take upon himself the sins of the world and set all people free.

With this background we will now begin our study of Chapters 40 and 41.

CHAPTER 40

About 250 years ago one of the world's greatest musicians died in London. His name was George Friedrich Handel. German-born, he took English citizenship and is buried in Westminster Abbey. He loved the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and set some of its words to music. He cherished the first verse of chapter 40, and his musical rendition, "Comfort ye, my people," has thrilled many listeners. These are fitting words to open the second part of this great prophesy. The assignment given to the Prophet is to speak tenderly to us, and to give us solace and hope. Who does not need comfort?

vv. 1-12 THE LORD IS COMING TO SAVE US

vv.1-2:

Question: What are the three reasons being comforted? _____,
_____, and _____.

vv. 3-5: Not long ago it was common in Malabar to repair the roads whenever an important person was coming. A voice is heard! It commands us to do some repair work and prepare a straight, level road. The Lord is coming!

Question: Does the Prophet mean a spiritual or a physical road? _____.

Question: In your opinion, what is the best way to prepare spiritually for the coming of God our Saviour? _____.

Note: The New Testament of the Bible regards Jesus the Messiah (Isa Masih) as the fulfillment of this prophecy, while John the Baptist is his forerunner. John tells us how we should prepare the road.

Please read the Appendix, Note A.

v. 5: God's salvation is meant for "all flesh." The Creator of all is also the Redeemer of all.

vv. 6-8: Everything in the world is temporary, and everyone passes away. Only God is eternal.

Question: Since this is true, what is the one thing that stands forever? _____.

vv. 9-10: These verses tell us of good tidings.

Question: Who is coming? _____.

Question: What is the good news in this announcement? _____.

God is present among us to save us. This is the best news that the people of the

world could ever receive.

v. 11

Question: According to this verse, what is God like? _____.
God goes in search of His wandering sheep and finds them.

Please read the Appendix, Note B.

vv. 12-31 THE INCOMPARABLE LORD AND SAVIOUR

vv. 12-17: God's names reveal His majesty and attributes. The most common names for God in chapters 40-66 are: Lord, Redeemer, Holy One, and Lord God; other names are Lord King, First and Last, Creator, Maker, Shaper and the Everlasting.

Question: In the light of these names what should be our attitude toward God? _____.

vv. 18-20: God as Creator is far above what He has created. He cannot be compared with anything. Yet people continue to make idols. Perhaps it is because they want God to be near to them. However, God is near to us in two other, far better ways.

Please read the Appendix, Note C.

vv. 21-26: God is even greater than the stars which He originated. The nearest star to us is Proxima Centauri. The fastest spacecraft ever built, Helios 2, went 250,000 kilometres per hour. Still it would take 17 years to reach that nearest star. How vast is this universe! How great is God!

Question: What does the Prophet say we should do? _____.

vv. 27-31: Even though God is far above us, He is also near us.

v. 27

Question: Does God see you? _____.

v. 28

Question: Does God understand your problems? _____.

Question: Does God get tired by taking care of you? _____.

vv. 30-31

Question: Does God strengthen you? _____.

v. 31

Question: What do you think it means to wait for the Lord? _____.

CHAPTER 41

Some people say human history proves that God does not rule anything. Or it proves that He doesn't care. In this chapter the Prophet says the opposite. Our God is aware of human history, and He cares. He created the world, and He will save it. But He does so in His own way -- first teaching us through the experience of the Hebrews, then redeeming us. In this chapter, in the Prophet's illustration, God invites us to a kind of court hearing. It will consider some facts about this matter. The facts demonstrate that God rules and so we have comfort and hope.

vv. 1-20 THE HEARING SHOWS THAT GOD RULES

v. 1: The hearing opens. The coastlands are invited. That means people from every land. Kerala too is a coastland.

Question: When the Prophet invites the coastlands, do you think that the people of Kerala are included? _____.

Note: Kerala and Palestine are connected. Trade with South India goes back to the time of Solomon, before Isaiah. Phoenician traders brought the king ivory and peacocks. When the Jews were in Babylon, they were close to the Persian trading centres. There are many traditions of early Jewish settlements in Kerala, including the community at Kochi (Cochin). They may have come as early as the Roman scattering of the Jews in the first century A.D. The first firm evidence is the Jewish Copper Plate Grant of 1000 A.D.

v. 4: The Lord is called "The first and the last." He knows about and is involved in all the events cited in vv. 1-7.

Please read Appendix, Note D.

Question: The Appendix Note D. tells you about the meaning of the first and last Greek letters. What are the first and last letters in the Malayalam alphabet? _____.

These letters signify that God is the beginning and end of our life.

v. 8

Question: What is Abraham called? _____.

In Arabic friend of God is Khalil Allah. If we have the faith of Abraham we also are

the friends of God.

v. 9

Question: What did God do for the descendants of Abraham? Two things _____
and _____.

v. 10

Question: How does God comfort His friends? Two things _____ and _____.

vv. 10-16: Note that in verses 10, 13, and 14 God says the same thing.

Question: What is that? _____.

vv. 17-20

Question: What promise does God give in these verses? _____.

vv. 17-29 THE COURT REVEALS THAT IDOLATRY IS FUTILE

The divine judge invites the idols to say what they think about these facts. But they cannot speak either about the past or the future. They give no warnings and no consolation to the people. There is no counsellor among them. The case finding is clear. They are a delusion. It is God alone Who rules. It is His hand that has done these things "so that all may see and know" (v. 20). "I the God of Israel will not forsake them" (v. 17).

APPENDIX

Isaiah in the New Testament

Note A

Isaiah 40, 3-4: The New Testament reference is Matthew 3, 1-4. John the Baptist appeared in a wilderness area of Judea, wearing a garment made from camel hair. He spoke these words about Jesus: "This is he who was spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah when he said prepare the way of the Lord, make his path straight." John also proclaimed this message: "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Many people went to the Jordan River and were baptized by John, confessing their sins.

Note B

Isaiah 40, 11: The New Testament reference is John 10, 11. Jesus the Saviour used the illustration of a shepherd to describe his mission. He said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. ... I know my own, and my own know me."

Note C

Isaiah 40, vv. 9 and 18: The New Testament references are Acts 17, 28-29 and John 1, vv. 1, 10 and 14.

In the Book of Acts St. Paul speaks to Athenian philosophers and says: "We ought not to think that deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals." For, he says, "In Him we live and move and have our being." The first way God is near to us is in spirit.

The second way God comes near to us is through His Word. St John writes: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... He was in the world ... yet the world did not know Him. ... And the Word was made flesh to dwell among us." God's grace and truth came near to us in a very personal way through Jesus, the Word.

Note D

Isaiah 41, 4: The New Testament reference is Revelation 1, 8. The New Testament of the Bible is written in Greek. The first letter of the Greek alphabet is Alpha, the last one is Omega. In Rev. 1, 8 The Lord speaks saying: "I am the Alpha and the Omega. ... Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty."

LESSON TEN

CHAPTER 42

"HERE IS MY SERVANT"

The word "servant" is used with two meanings in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. It is quite common to have words with more than one meaning.

- ❖ The first meaning describes an **individual**, a single person who performs a special service. Since that person is the Saviour from God, we will use a capital letter for this Deliverer. There are four poems about Him.
- ❖ The second meaning of "servant" describes a **group** of people. They are faithful Hebrews whom God has chosen for a special purpose. They are often called the children of Israel or Israel.

The reader can usually tell whether the Prophet is prophesying about the Saviour or about the saved people. Sometimes it is a little difficult.

You have already seen that the Prophet often shifts quickly from one subject to another. That is the way prophesies are given and written down. In this chapter the Prophet changes topics rapidly. In verses 1-4 he prophesies about the Servant-Saviour. In verses 5-9 he addresses the Hebrew people. In verses 10-18 he speaks to the wider world. Then in verses 19-25 he returns to the subject of the chosen people and their disobedience.

vv. 1-4 THE SERVANT-SAVIOUR

Question: Five qualities of the Servant-Saviour are described. What are they? _____,
_____, _____, _____ and _____.

v. 4: The meaning of the word justice is broad. It means doing the right thing or putting God's will into effect.

vv. 5-9 THE CHOSEN PEOPLE AND THE TASK OF SALVATION

vv. 5-7: Now God addresses the servant Israel. God has given His people a righteous purpose and task.

Question: What are two things they are asked to do? _____ and _____.

v. 6

Question: To whom are God's people to be a light? _____.

v. 9: The Prophet announces that prophecies about the past have been fulfilled, but now he is communicating quite a new thing.

Question: What is the new thing that the Prophet foretells? _____.

Please read Appendix, Note A.

vv. 10-18 A SONG FOR THE WIDER WORLD

v. 10: The Prophet invites the world to sing. Salvation is wonderful. Many who experience it say: "Open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise."

Question: Why does the Prophet call this a new song? _____.

v. 11: Sela means the people south of Judea. Kedar means the Arabs. None of these are Hebrews, but they too are invited to sing.

Question: What does this tell us about God's salvation? _____.

vv. 13-17: Verse 13 pictures God as a good soldier; v. 14 as a mother who has suffered to bring a child into the world; v. 16 as a guide who leads a blind person.

Question: Do you think pictures help us to understand God? _____.

It is good to remember that God is greater than our pictures.

Verse 17 warns against idols.

vv. 19-25 GOD REBUKES HIS DISOBEDIENT FOLLOWERS

v. 19

Question: According to verse 19 against whom are these verses directed? _____.

v. 24

Question: When we commit sin, against whom do we sin? _____.

This important verse gives us the reason for God's anger and punishment. God the Holy One created human beings to be holy. Instead, even His chosen people became disobedient. This makes the Almighty sorrowful. It is clear that since all our sins are really against God, it is God Himself Who must provide a way for our forgiveness.

CHAPTER 43**vv. 1-13 THE REDEEMER LORD KEEPS HIS COVENANT**

v. 1: This verse contains good news of a precious gift.

Question: When did God's relation with His people begin? _____.

Question: What did God do to save His people? _____.

Question: What is the meaning of the word ransom? _____.

Question: When God calls people by name, it means they are _____.

In the 53rd chapter of the Book of Isaiah we will discover the price that God paid to redeem us.

Please read Appendix, Note B.

v. 2: The God Who creates you is the God Who redeems you. The God Who redeems you is the God Who takes care of you. Fire and flood mean "troubles." The Lord says, "Do not fear."

v. 3

Question: What names are given to God in this verse? _____.

v. 4

Question: What is God's feeling towards His people? _____.

vv. 3-4: The reference to other nations is picture language. God loves all people including the people of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sela (near Bozrah in Edom). However, he is first restoring the Hebrews so that they can tell other people about His salvation.

vv. 5-7: The Lord will keep His covenant and gather His people.

v. 10

Question: In return for that God's people will have two functions: to be His _____ and _____.

v. 11

Question: What does this verse say about God? _____.

v. 12

Question: What does this verse say about our duty? _____.

vv. 14-21 THE HEBREW EXILES WILL RETURN FROM BABYLON

The greatest event in the history of the children of Israel came when God delivered them from Egypt, about 800 years before Isaiah lived. Unfortunately Abraham's grandson Jacob and his sons had to leave Palestine because of a famine and go to Egypt. There the Hebrew family remained as slaves for about 200 years. God finally compelled the Egyptians to let them return home. When they came to the Red Sea, He opened a pathway for them and they were able to cross safely. When the Egyptian military tried to follow them and bring them back, the waters came together and they drowned. Forty long years later, after wandering in the Sinai wilderness, the children of Israel finally came to the promised land. This great event is called the Exodus.

Now, many years later, God is once again rescuing them, this time from Babylon. And this time He will guide them through a desert instead of through the sea. In both these cases the rescue symbolizes that God is the Saviour-Lord. In the same way as He deals with His chosen people God will rescue the whole world that He loves.

v. 15

Question: What are the four names of God in this verse? _____, _____, _____, and _____.

vv. 16-20: Through the Prophet God reminds the people about the first rescue from Egypt and then says He is going to do something new.

Question: What is the new thing He will do? _____.

v. 21

Question: According to this verse why did God create us? _____.

vv. 22-24: Instead of honouring God in word and deed the chosen people produced many problems with their behaviour. They made God tired (v. 24).

Question: Do you think God can get tired and suffer? _____.

vv. 26-27

Question: Since Adam is the first ancestor of the human race, when did sin begin in the world?

By "your interpreters" in verse 27 the Prophet refers to false prophets. Speaking falsely in the name of God is also a great sin. With the words "the princes of the sanctuary" the Prophet refers to bad priests and clergy. Religious leaders have their

own sins. Everyone suffers from the curse of sin and needs the merciful and compassionate Forgiver.

NOW READ VERSE 25.

v. 25

Question: In your own words re-write this great verse in the following space: _____
_____.

APPENDIX

Isaiah in the New Testament

Note A

Isaiah 42, 1-4: The New Testament reference is Matthew 12, 18-21. These four verses of Isaiah are fully quoted and applied to Jesus the Messiah. Jesus had healed a man on the day of worship. Some criticized him for doing that, but many others appreciated what he had done and followed him. He also healed many others. The Gospel says that this was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

Note B

Isaiah 43, 1: The New Testament references are Matthew 20, 28 and 1 Timothy 2, 6. In Matthew Jesus the Saviour says: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." In the 1 Timothy passage the scripture says: "There is one God, there is also one mediator between God and humankind. Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all."

LESSON ELEVEN

[This Lesson includes Chapters 44 and 45.]

GOD'S PROGRAM OF SALVATION BEGINS WITH ACT ONE:

RESTORING HIS PEOPLE

Transition Thought: God the Ruler is coming to save. The first stage will be to bring the exiles home from Babylon.

CHAPTER 44, vv. 1-8 BLESSINGS ON THE SERVANT JACOB

[Remember that the word "servant" has two meanings; here it refers to God's faithful people.]

v. 1

Question: What are the four names for God's people? _____, _____,
_____, and _____.

vv. 2-3

Question: What are two great blessings God will give His people? _____
and _____.

v. 5: The verse says that other people besides Hebrews will join the ranks of the blessed ones.

v. 8

Question: What is the role of those who have received God's blessings? They will be
_____.

vv. 9-20 IT IS THE DUTY OF GOD'S SERVANT TO AVOID IDOLATRY

The Prophet keeps returning to the subject of idolatry. In his time the major type of idolatry was constructing images of gods and goddesses, and then worshipping them. In these verses the Prophet explains how foolish that is.

In our time the major forms of idolatry are the veneration of money, possessions, power, beauty and even living individuals. A wise man named Martin Luther once said: "Whatever you put first in your life is your god."

Question: Do you think that sometimes our admiration of athletes, film stars, political leaders, or religious leaders comes close to idolatry? _____.

CHAPTER 44, v. 21 - CHAPTER 45, v. 8 THE RESTORATION OF JACOB

This section teaches us important things. It tells us that God keeps His promises. It reminds us that He is in control. And it tells us that He is the Lord of the universe Who can use anyone for His good purpose.

v. 21

Question: What does God want the descendants of Jacob to remember? _____.

vv. 22-23: The Prophet proclaims the Greater Salvation that is coming, the salvation of the world. When that comes the whole earth will break forth into singing.

vv. 24-28: Before that happens there will be a "first-stage" salvation, the deliverance of the children of Israel from Babylon.

v. 26

Question: Whose prophesy will that action fulfil? _____.

v. 27

Question: Through whose intervention will the restoration take place? _____.

This is an astonishing event! God uses the Emperor of Persia as His instrument. The Lord God Almighty is not a tribal deity. He is the Lord of all. Just as He once used Assyria as an instrument of chastisement, so now He uses Cyrus as a means of liberation.

v. 28

Question: What title is given to Cyrus? _____.

Ch. 45, 1: The word "Anointed" means appointed for a high calling. It was used especially for kings when they were crowned. In Hebrew the word is mashiah, in Arabic it is masih, and in Greek it is christos.

v. 2

Question: Who is it that called Cyrus for a special purpose? _____.

Cyrus was not known to be very religious. He worshipped a deity named Marduk, but also other gods. He did not know the Lord God Almighty, nor did he realize that it was He Who was appointing him. In these verses it is prophesied that Cyrus will discover who God really is.

vv. 5-7

Question: What does God say about Himself in these verses? _____.

v. 8: Earlier the Prophet had said, "Sing a new song" (42:8). This verse is a new song of peace and good cheer.

Question: Do you think that a Malayali musician could provide a good tune for this happy song? _____.

vv. 9-13 THE COMPLAINERS

How can God anoint a non-Hebrew Persian king?! Some Hebrews dared to criticize God for doing this. They did not have God the Saviour's vision. In fact, they were communalists. They thought that because they were the chosen people, they were better than others. The Prophet shows them how wrong they are.

Question: If God loves everyone, local or foreign, high or low, even sinners, should we be happy or sad? _____.

Question: Have you ever read the famous story of the Prodigal Son? _____.

Note: If you have not read it and want a copy, the BCC Centre can send you one.

v. 13

Question: What principle moved Cyrus to free the Jewish captives? _____.

Question: Do you think that God sometimes intervenes in human affairs today? _____.

When we see good things happen we may wonder, how can we know whether God is behind it? The key is goodness. If something good happens in the world, we can confidently praise God and thank Him for it. If something evil occurs, we need to remember that God is the Holy One. He does not do evil and opposes it.

vv. 14-19 SALVATION FOR THE WHOLE WORLD, SALVATION FOR YOU

v. 14: This is a powerful verse. Here the Prophet is prophesying about God's spiritual kingdom. It will include all people and will extend to the ends of the earth. Just as it included Cyrus toward the east, so also it will extend southward to the nations of the Nile River valley. It will include Egypt, Nubia-Sudan and Ethiopia. In those days these were names that people used to include the whole world. All people will be redeemed by God, and members of many nations and cultures will be bound to Him by chains of love. Some day they will thank the children of Israel for channeling the truth: "There is no other God but the Lord Who saves!"

vv. 15-17: For many people it seemed as though God was hiding Himself in the small family of Abraham. But like a seed that tree has now become large. It is the world community of believers. So the name Israel has a new meaning; in the New Testament of the Bible the apostle Paul, who was himself a Hebrew, calls all believers "the Israel of God." He prays, "Peace be upon them and mercy" (Galatians 6:16).

Question: For how many years does God's salvation last? _____.

vv. 18-25 GOD RECONSTRUCTS THE WORLD BY HIS FORGIVING LOVE

vv. 18-19: God is not the Creator of chaos. He formed the earth beautifully, and now in His mercy He reforms it. When His first creation became chaotic through sin, He re-created it by His strong Word of forgiveness that He announces through His messengers.

Question: Amongst the many voices in the world why should we give preference to the Word of God (v. 19)? _____.

vv. 20-21

Question: The Almighty invites us to assemble. What two great names does verse 21 give to Him? _____ and _____.

v. 22

Question: What does God say to us? That is, what does it mean "to turn"? _____.

v. 23: Our salvation is important to the merciful God. He utters the most sacred vow: "By myself I have sworn."

Question: What is His promise in this verse? _____.

Please read Appendix, Note A.

APPENDIX

Isaiah in the New Testament

Note A

Isaiah 45, 23: The New Testament reference is Romans 14, 10-12. St. Paul writes: "We will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written:

‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me,
And every tongue shall give praise to God.’

So then each of us will be accountable to God."

LESSON TWELVE

[This Lesson includes Chapters 46, 47 and 48.]

CHAPTER 46

vv. 1-7 THE FALL OF BABYLON

The Babylonians were afraid. The Persians were more powerful, and they were coming from the east. The Babylonian king was in Arabia. They did not know what to do. They began packing their idols to carry them to safety. The Prophet mocks them. What use is an idol that cannot help you when you are in trouble?

The Babylonians had lots of deities including a kind of Trimurthi. Anu was in charge of the heavens, Bel (=Baal) was over the earth and the air, and Ea ruled over the waters. Bel was considered to be the most powerful. He was the sun god, the same as the Assyrian Marduk. Nebo, the god of destiny, was his son. But now all these gods in their idol forms were being loaded on ox-carts. If a karlawandi has to carry a protector, does it have any reality or power?

vv. 3-4: The Prophet knows the reality. We do not have to carry God. God carries us!

Question: Have you seen a picture of a shepherd carrying his sheep? _____.
That is what God is like!

Question: Have you seen the burden-bearer beside our roads? _____.

That illustrates God's character. He bears our burdens!

v. 5

Question: In your opinion, who was the most noble ruler who ever lived in this country?
_____. What was his or her greatest quality? _____.

Now multiply X 10. That is God!

vv. 8-13 GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

In 1947 when our country became free, our leaders set up a series of five-year plans to set things right. Some emphasized industry, some agriculture, some technology, and some other forms of development. They helped our nation to go forward.

When humankind fell into sin and death, God set up a plan to set things right. It is not only for five years, but for eternity. It is a plan to restore creation and to bring new life to every child of God. His good purpose will stand.

v. 10: Below is a summary of that purpose and plan.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION FOR THE WORLD

- ❖ God's plan comes from His heart of love.
- ❖ God created the world, and everything was good.
- ❖ God created humanity, and everything was good.
- ❖ The people He created rebelled, and God was sad.
- ❖ God decided to save His children.
- ❖ God sent the Servant-Saviour to deliver us.

THE ROLE OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE IN GOD'S PLAN

- ❖ God chose Abraham's descendants as the family through whom the Servant-Saviour would come.
- ❖ Called the children of Israel they were to be God's obedient servants and be worthy of the special service.
- ❖ They repeatedly went astray.
- ❖ God repeatedly rescued them so that His plan could be fulfilled.

THE COMING OF THE SERVANT-SAVIOUR

- ❖ When he comes, he will be "God With Us".
- ❖ What he will do to save us is outlined by the Prophet, especially in chapters 52-55.
- ❖ By his suffering love he will take away our sins.
- ❖ All this happened, and God's plan is fulfilled.

Question: What does this plan mean for me? _____.

Ch. 46, v. 8 says: **“Remember this and consider.”**

v. 11

Question: Who is "the man from the east?" _____.

vv. 12-13: We may wonder why God chose the Hebrews to bear the message of God's plan of salvation rather than Mongolians or Malayalis or Canadians!

Question: Do you agree that there are some questions we cannot answer but must leave to God? _____.

CHAPTER 47

THE DISGRACE OF BABYLON

The Prophet foretells that not only will Babylon fall, but it will experience considerable humiliation. The chapter has four parts:

vv. 1-3 Babylon, which is pictured as a fallen empress, will become like a poor slave-girl;

vv. 5-7 She will fade into a kind of national and cultural darkness;

vv. 8-9 Two great sins have contributed to her downfall;

vv. 10-15 Neither magicians nor astrologers can save her.

Question: Write the first five words of verse one and the last three words of verse fifteen together _____.
These words summarize the chapter.

v. 8

Question: What were the two great sins of Babylon? _____ and _____.
Note: These are also two prominent sins in our modern society.

v. 10: A humble servant of God will say, "You are the Lord. Your will be done. Show me the straight path."

Question: What arrogant words will someone say who has been overcome by pride?
_____.

vv. 11-15: Babylon's "wisdom" was not the wisdom of faith or reason, but rather it was based on superstition. People depended a lot on charms, magicians and astrologers.

v. 14

Question: According to this verse what do these practices resemble? _____.

CHAPTER 48

A SUMMARY OF THEMES IN CHAPTERS 40-47

This chapter summarizes some important themes that the Prophet has dealt with in Chapters 40-47. They include: spiritual responsibility, the communication of God's will, the possibility of restoration, and the need to grasp opportunities.

vv. 1-2: The theme that is reviewed is spiritual responsibility. Those who want to be God's people must seek to be godly. Nominal religion is wrong. We must take holiness seriously. The name of Jerusalem, the holy city, is a symbol of that need.

Question: Do you think there are practical things you can do to make your village or city a more holy place? _____.

vv. 3-11: The second theme reviewed is that God makes known His will. To do that God sent many prophets to His chosen people. They foretold God's plans and decisions in advance. In this way the Lord felt that He could break through His people's obstinacy (v. 4) and their rebellious nature (v. 8). This would also counteract their tendency to idolatry (v. 5). When the people ignored the prophets, God allowed adversity to fall on them, in order to get their attention (vv. 9-11).

Question: In the modern age with its many voices, God does not use prophets as His communication method. How does He communicate with us now?
_____.

vv. 12-16: The third theme under review is restoration. Specifically it is the restoration of God's faithful remnant, with the help of Cyrus, "the one I love." The people should be hopeful and grateful.

v. 16: This is a personal appeal from the Prophet. The verse means: "The Lord has sent me to declare these things. He has also given me His Spirit so that I can deliver the message truly. Please listen!"

v. 17

Question: What two things is God ready to do for you? _____ and _____.

vv. 18-20: The fourth theme that the Prophet summarizes is that we should grasp our opportunities when we have them.

Question: Have you ever missed a good chance, which you later regretted? _____. As individuals most of us have done that. Communities and societies may also miss good opportunities. The Hebrews had many excellent chances but often did not take advantage of them. As the result they experienced much suffering. These verses note especially two opportunities. They missed the chance for shalom, a life of blessing (שָׁלוֹם). And they missed getting a reputation for sadaqa, the Hebrew word for a virtuous life.

"Now," the Prophet says to the Hebrew exiles, "you are being freed from bondage. **Do not miss this chance!**"

Question: What does he exhort them to do? (v. 20) _____.

v. 20

Question: What is the duty of those who have experienced God's salvation? _____.

v. 21: This verse reminds the Hebrews of their exodus from Egypt when the Lord gave them water in the Sinai desert. There He commanded the Prophet Moses to strike a rock, and it brought forth water. Now when they flee Babylon and go into the desert, they will

experience similar mercies.

In our spiritual lives we must sometimes go out when God calls. We are always in a state of migration - from wrong to right, from selfishness to self-giving, from the world to God. That may mean suffering, but in Isaiah 17, 10 the God of salvation is called "The Rock of Refuge."

LESSON THIRTEEN

[This Lesson includes Chapters 49, 50, 51, and 52, 1-6]

Transition Thought: Chapters 49-55 explain how God saves the world. They are a high point in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

CHAPTER 49

vv. 1-7 GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION UNFOLDS

The promised one is coming. In Isaiah 7 he is called "God with us" (Immanuel). In Isaiah 9 he is given the titles "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace." In Isaiah 11 we hear that he will have God's Spirit and will bring righteousness. In Isaiah 42 he is the Servant who will convey light to the nations. In the coming chapters we will see that the Servant must suffer on our behalf.

v. 1

Question: Who called the Servant to this service? _____.

v. 3

Question: What did the Lord say to him? _____.

v. 4

Question: What sadness does the Servant see when he looks ahead? _____.

Working hard and seeing few results is a form of suffering.

v. 6

Question: To whom will the Servant bring God's light and salvation? _____ and _____.

Question: At first what attitude will people have toward the Servant-Saviour? _____.

Question: Later who will bow before him? _____.

vv. 8-26 THE RESTORATION OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

v. 8: The "time of favour" and the "day of salvation" are beautiful phrases.

Question: What do they mean? _____.

We have already seen that the first stage of God's saving plan will be the restoration of God's people to Judea. God had made a covenant with them and He is keeping it. They were appointed to receive God's messages, to be a representative model of piety, and to be the family of origin for the Servant-Saviour. In that sense they too were God's servants, but they carried out their service very weakly. Though sharply reduced in numbers they will now receive a final opportunity, their "day of salvation," to prove their faithfulness.

vv. 9-12: The "home-coming" is described in picture language. The people will return home not only from Babylon, but from every direction. Some will come from as far away as Sinin, which is Aswan in southern Egypt.

v. 13

Question: In this exultant verse the Prophet says that God will do two things for His people. What are they? _____ and _____.

Because the Lord of the Universe is also the Comforter and the Compassionate One, sincere people everywhere will have a sense of blessed assurance in their hearts.

vv. 14-15

Question: Because the Hebrews can't quite believe it, God tells them that His love exceeds even that of _____.

vv. 16-17: It is natural for the Hebrews to doubt when they look at the collapsed walls of their city.

Question: What does God tell them? _____.

v. 18

Question: What should the Hebrews do? _____.

Sometimes we become so sad and so troubled that we cannot believe anything.

Question: Write down the last three [Malayalam] words of verse 15 _____.

vv. 19-21: Their blessings will exceed all expectations! Their families will increase in size once again and their children will play safely in the streets.

v. 23

Question: Who is it that will not be put to shame? _____.

vv. 24-26: God reminds the Hebrews that no one can block His determination to save humanity.

v. 25

Question: Which family group does He especially mention as part of His saving plan?

_____.

CHAPTER 50

WHO IS A GODLY PERSON?

When the remnant of the Hebrews returns to Judea, they will also have to return to their special calling -- that is to be a godly people. But what is a godly person? This chapter provides three underlying principles for godliness. The first is to recognize one's need for God's Spirit; the second is to listen to God; and the third is to be determined to obey His will.

vv. 1-3 RECOGNIZE YOUR NEED

A godly person knows that he or she needs God's presence in one's life. The Prophet uses two pictures to illustrate that God's arms are always open to such a person.

Picture One: According to Jewish law a woman who has been divorced cannot come back to her husband if she married another man after the divorce. The meaning of this picture is: God has not put away the Hebrews. He still loves them and they can come back to Him.

Picture Two: God has not sold the children of Israel like some slave-dealers to settle his debts. God does not have debts, and He has not put away His children. He still loves them, and they can come back to Him.

v. 2: Imagine that someone comes to your house and knocks on the door. He knows that you are home, but you do not answer. Think how that person must feel!

Question: How do you think God feels if He knocks at the door of our hearts and we do not open?

Note: There is a famous religious picture that is sometimes to be seen on the wall of a family home. It shows a saintly looking man knocking at a door. From the expression on his face he is wondering why no one answers. The picture represents a verse in the New Testament of the Bible.

Please read Appendix, Note A.

vv. 4-9 A GODLY PERSON LISTENS LIKE THE SERVANT

v. 4

Question: How does a godly person discover God's directions? How does God speak to us now? _____.

Whenever we study God's Word, His Spirit "awakens our ear." There is a beautiful verse in the Old Testament Psalms (119, 105), which says: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Question: Anyone and everyone who has received God's salvation has an obligation. What is that? _____.

We cannot be great teachers like the Servant, but we can share the good news.

vv. 5-6: People who stand up for goodness and justice often experience suffering. That is the work of Satan who is trying to overcome good with evil. The Servant-Saviour himself suffered greatly for doing right, but he did not look backward. A godly person needs to pray for courage.

Question: Will God help us as He helped the Servant-Saviour? _____.

vv. 10-11 A GODLY PERSON OBEYS AND TRUSTS

vv. 10-11: The Prophet says (v. 11) that we all have a tendency to light our own fires, that is, to solve our problems by our own strength alone. However, with that approach we will only walk in our own flames.

v. 10

Question: What is the approach of those who fear God? _____.

God-fearers combine obedience and trust. Even though the road ahead seems dark at times, they rely upon God to lead them with His kindly light.

CHAPTER 51, 1 TO 52, 12LISTEN, PAY HEED, AWAKE, START THE JOURNEY!vv. 1-16 THE LISTENING

There were four things the people in Babylon had to do to be saved, starting with listening. We also need to do these four things.

v. 1

Question: Who should listen? _____.

To those who intend to listen the Prophet gives five facts for their consideration.

v. 2

Question: What is the first fact they should remember? _____.

v. 3

Question: What is the second fact? _____.

Note: Eden was the name of the garden where the Creator put the first man and woman. There they experienced joy and gladness, thanksgiving and song, before they were expelled for wrong-doing.

vv. 4-5

Question: What is the third fact they should consider? _____.

v. 6

Question: What are the last two facts they should think about? _____
and _____.

vv. 7-8: All these facts are a part of God's teaching. We can find that teaching in books, but there is an even better place.

v. 7

Question: Where should we keep His teaching? _____.

v. 8

Question: How long will God's deliverance last? _____.

vv. 9-14: The Prophet prays for the listeners; he asks God to rescue His people now in the same way He has done in the past.

v. 9: Rahab and the Great Dragon or Snake are monsters in the legends of the Canaanites.

v. 10

Question: What sea did God dry up when He saved His people from the hands of the Egyptians? _____.

v. 11

Question: When God gives joy and gladness, what flees away? _____.

vv. 12-14: Fear comes when we look at our own weakness or at our persecutors rather than looking at the Almighty and His power. Someone has wisely said: what we should fear most is fear itself.

vv. 15-16: The One Who holds the whole world in His hand also holds us safely. Are you listening?

vv. 17-23 THE PAYING HEED

v. 17: Listening is one thing. Now you must pay heed. That means pay attention and let what you hear affect your life. Sometimes disasters and troubles produce a kind of stupor. You cannot think clearly. The Prophet declares, God is taking away your griefs. Pay heed!

Question: What does the Prophet tell the people to do? _____.

v. 18

Question: What was the first disaster the Hebrews faced? _____.

vv. 19-20

Question: What were the second and third disasters? _____.

Physical disasters strike us all, including sickness and famine. Unusual disasters strike some of us. In 1991 the Bangladesh cyclone killed 150,000 people and one million animals. Where could they look for help? Many people prayed to God, and God sent help. Miracles took place.

vv. 21-23: Sometimes the disasters are human oppressors. God's promise is that they will no longer walk over you. He will take away the cup of suffering.

vv. 1-10 THE WAKING UP

v. 1

Question: Why should the Hebrews wake up? _____.

The "uncircumcised and unclean" refers to foreign colonialists. It is now

Abraham's family, the Hebrews, who will re-possess the holy city.

vv. 2-6: These verses review the history of the Hebrew days in bondage. By delivering His people from these difficulties God shows that He is in control.

v. 6

Question: This verse has fifteen [Malayalam] words. Write the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth words _____, _____, _____, and _____.

"I AM" is the Supreme Name of God. It signifies that God's promises are sure.

vv. 7-10: It is a beautiful thing to tell the story of salvation. The full story includes both the restoration of the chosen people and -- above all -- the deliverance of the whole world.

v. 7

Question: What do God's genuine messengers announce? _____, _____, and _____.

vv. 8-9

Question: Why should the people sing for joy? _____.

v. 10

Question: Who will see the salvation of our God? _____.

vv. 11-12 NOW START YOUR JOURNEY

In 48:20 the Prophet cried, "Go out!" Here he repeats the command, "Depart!" It is time to go home. Start your journey. Don't run. Don't panic. Carefully pack the sacred vessels you brought from the Jerusalem Temple. Purify yourselves and leave. When your forefathers left Egypt and entered a wilderness, God guided them by a cloud in the day-time and a bright object at night. He will do the same for you now. Now get up and leave.

In a spiritual sense the same command comes to every one of us: "Return to God, confess your sins, grasp the hem of His garment, and He will save you. On your journey through life He will go before you and be your rearguard. So start your journey!"

APPENDIX

Isaiah in the New Testament

Note A

Isaiah 50, 2: The New Testament reference is Revelation 3, 19-20.

The writer says:

"Be earnest, therefore, and repent. Listen! I am standing at the door and knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne."