

Psalm 94, I Kings 16-21 (#72)

Psalm 94 — God's role as divine Judge is examined in this psalm.
various types of people listed here?

What actions does God take toward the

I Kings 16— After eliminating the entire house of Jeroboam, Baasha reigns for 24 years in Tirzah and does evil in the sight of the Lord. The prophet Jehu declares God's judgment upon all the male descendents of Baasha, and they are all killed by his commander Zimri during the reign of Baasha's son Elah. Zimri's reign lasted only seven days and then he is killed by Omri, the army commander. Upon the death of Zimri, Omri and Tibni each controlled half of Israel, but Omri proved stronger and founded the third dynasty in Israel. Omri was a shrewd and gifted leader who bought and built up the hill of Samaria which became the capital city until Israel's captivity in 722 B.C. Omri married his son Ahab to a princess of Tyre named Jezebel, and she introduced the worship of Baal and Asherah to Israel. After a reign of twelve years, Omri's son Ahab became king, and ruled for 22 years and did more to provoke the Lord than any of the previous kings. A prophecy of Joshua is fulfilled when two sons of Hiel died as he rebuilt the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:26).
What insights do you see on the nature, character, or attributes of God in this chapter?

I Kings 17— The last six chapters of I Kings describe the history of king Ahab, and the next three chapters speak of the struggle between Ahab and the prophet Elijah. Elijah confronts Ahab and declares that there will be no rain in the land of Israel in the future until he gives the command. First, Elijah travels east of the Jordan River to the brook Cherith where he is fed by the ravens that brought him bread and meat each morning and evening. When the brook dried up, the Lord sent him to a widow in the town of Zarephath in Sidon, and the Lord provided for them with a jar that contained flour that never became empty and a jug of olive oil that never ran dry. The son of the woman of Zarephath became ill and died. Elijah carried the boy to his upper room, laid him on his bed, and prayed earnestly for him. Yahweh listened to Elijah and the boy's life was returned to him.
What comment did Jesus give about this widow of Zarephath, and what did He mean by it? See Luke 4:24-27. How might that apply to us?

I Kings 18— This chapter portrays the encounter between Elijah, Ahab, and 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah on Mount Carmel. Elijah summons through Obadiah, the administrator of the palace, that Ahab meet

him. Then Ahab, the false prophets, and all the people assemble with Elijah on Mount Carmel for a dramatic confrontation to see if Baal or Yahweh is the true God. A bull is to be cut in pieces, put on the altar of wood, and then the prophets of Baal are to call on their gods, and then Elijah would call on the Lord. The God that answers by sending fire and consuming the sacrifice is the true God. After a full day of crying out to Baal to answer by fire, the prophets of Baal were bloody and exhausted, and there was no answer to their fervent pleas. After preparing the altar and the sacrifice, and drenching it with water, Elijah called on the name of the Lord and fire fell from heaven and completely consumed the sacrifice, the altar, and licking up the water. All the people “fell facedown and said, ‘Yahweh, He is God! Yahweh, He is God (v. 39 HCSB).’ ” After seizing and slaying the prophets of Baal, Elijah and Ahab hurriedly headed back to Jezreel to beat the great rainstorm that would cause the drought to end. *When Ahab met Elijah after more than three years of famine, he said to Elijah, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel (v. 17)?” How did Elijah answer him, and how is Ahab’s accusation so similar to what is happening to Christians in our county and in the world?*

I Kings 19— After celebrating a glorious victory over the 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah, Elijah becomes fearful and runs away because of the threats of Jezebel to take his life. God gently strengthens Elijah with sleep and food, and then he travels a 40 day journey to Mount Horeb (Mount Sinai) where God manifests Himself. As Elijah stands in the Lord’s presence, God reveals Himself in a soft whisper but not in a mighty shattering wind or an earthquake. God tells Elijah that he is not alone in the struggle, but there are still 7000 in Israel who have not bowed their knee to Baal. Elijah is given new instructions and is told to anoint three important men who will cause the final victory over Baal in Israel. One of the three men is Elisha who is anointed to be Elijah’s servant and successor. Elisha celebrates his calling by sacrificing his team of oxen as an offering of thanksgiving to the Lord and sharing the meat with the people. *Elijah lost perspective of the power of the God of Israel and had a bout of fear and depression when he was threatened by Jezebel. Describe a time you have become fearful and lost perspective of the reality of God’s power and control over your circumstances. What helped you to overcome this fear?*

I Kings 20— Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, assembles a great army with 32 other kings and lays siege to Samaria, demanding that they are allowed to sack the city and take anything they want. Through a prophet, the Lord tells Ahab that He will hand the entire army over to Israel so that he may know that Yahweh is the Lord. Through God’s power, Israel’s army inflicted a great slaughter on Aram and the coalition of 32 kings. Thinking that Israel’s God was strong in the hill country but not on the plain, Ben-hadad mobilized another army and went up to Aphek to battle

Ahab and his army. For a second time the man of God prophesied victory to Ahab, and Israel struck down 100,000 Arameans in one day with another 27,000 dying when the wall of the city of Aphek fell on them. When Ben-hadad was captured, Ahab sets him free and receives the Lord's condemnation for violating the rules of holy war. A prophet pronounces judgment on Ahab for letting Ben-hadad go, and Ahab went home resentful and angry. *In verses 23-25, Ben-hadad and his servants said the reason Israel won the first battle is that their gods are the gods of the hills, but if they would fight Israel on the plain, Aram would win the battle. What lesson was God teaching both Aram and Israel in the second battle? See verse 28. How can we apply this to our own lives?*

I Kings 21— A man named Naboth owned a vineyard in Jezreel next to the palace of Ahab. After asking Naboth to sell the vineyard and receiving a negative response, Ahab went back to the palace resentful and angry. Finding Ahab sulking and refusing to eat, his wife, Jezebel, was told the story about the vineyard and then planned a way to get the vineyard for him. She set up a plot to have Naboth accused of treason and blasphemy that was carried out by the Elders and Nobles of the city. Upon the killing of Naboth, Ahab went to the vineyard to take possession and was confronted by Elijah. He pronounces judgment upon Ahab and his household by declaring that all of Ahab's male descendants will be eliminated, and the dogs will eat Jezebel in the plot of land in Jezreel they had confiscated from Naboth. Upon hearing God's judgment, Ahab humbled himself and the Lord showed mercy and graciously extended His judgment until after his death. *What does this chapter show about (1) Naboth (v. 3), (2) Ahab (vv. 4), (3) Jezebel (vv. 7-10), (4) the elders and leaders of Jezreel (vv. 11-13), and (5) the Lord (vv. 27-29)?*

Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups . c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESVc. 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Halley's Bible Handbook, c. 2000, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Understanding the Bible c. 2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 13. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL.

Psalm 95, I Kings 22, I Thessalonians 1-5 (#73)

Psalm 95 — This psalm (possibly written by David) celebrates God’s sovereignty and exhorts us to remain malleable to His instruction. *The dangers of hardening our hearts toward God are still present today. What are some ways that we can avoid making the same mistake that the Israelites did? See also Hebrews 3:12-15 & 4:6-7*

I Kings 22— This chapter and book ends with the death of Ahab, the reign of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the introduction of Ahab’s son, Ahaziah, as king. In order to take back Ramoth-gilead from Aram, Ahab invited Jehoshaphat and the army of Judah to go with him. The good king Jehoshaphat asks Ahab to find out what the Lord’s will is. Ahab gathers 400 false prophets who proclaim victory, but Jehoshaphat insists they hear from a prophet of Yahweh. The prophet Micaiah predicts that Ahab will die in battle. As they go to combat, Ahab disguises himself and tells Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes. “But a man drew his bow without taking special aim and struck the king of Israel through the joints of his armor (v. 34 HCSB).” Jehoshaphat follows his father Asa, and rules for 35 years, and does what is right in the sight of the Lord. Ahab’s son, Ahaziah, rules in Samaria for two years and walked in the ways of his father. *What evidence do we see in this chapter that Jehoshaphat was (1) a good and godly king and at the same time (2) not so wise? Verses 5, 7, 29, 30, 43, 44, and 46.*

I Thessalonians— Paul and his companions Silas and Timothy arrived in Thessalonica on his second missionary journey in about 50 A.D. After beginning the church, jealous Jews started a riot that forced Paul to flee the city. Paul was greatly concerned about the welfare of the church he planted in Thessalonica and sent Timothy to find out the condition of the church which was under great persecution. I Thessalonians is a letter by Paul to the church to encourage them, praise them for their faithfulness, tell them of his love for them, instruct them in God’s truth, and remind them in the midst of suffering about the glorious appearing of Christ which is the believer’s great hope. The return of Christ for His people is mentioned in every chapter and is the prominent theme of this book.

I Thessalonians 1— In this first chapter Paul expresses his great joy for the transformed lives of the believers in this church. In every way they showed the genuineness of their election by their “work produced by faith, labor prompted by love, and endurance inspired by the hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3).” When Paul preached the gospel to them, the Spirit of God radically convicted them of their sins, turned them from idolatry, and made them a model of true faith to all the believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. The ability to endure suffering came because of their living hope in the imminent return of Jesus. *What indications or evidence might we show that the gospel has truly been heard and believed by a person or a local church in our day?*

I Thessalonians 2— In this chapter Paul opens up his heart and life in full transparency to this beloved church as he shares his godly motives and conduct. First he defended himself from any evil ulterior motives but stated that he treated them with the gentleness of a nursing mother and conducted himself blamelessly. As a father with his own children, he encouraged them to walk worthy of God (vv. 1-12). The apostle thanked God that the message he preached was received as the very words of God with the effect that they were imitators of the churches of Judea who had gone through great suffering at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. Although he was forced to leave them because of the great persecution, he greatly desired to be with them but was hindered by Satan to do so. Paul was looking forward to the reunion with them at the coming of the Lord Jesus (vv. 13-20). *From verses 1 to 12, what were the evil motives and actions that Paul said were not a part of his ministry to the Thessalonians?*

I Thessalonians 3— Because of his anxious concern for the welfare of the church in Thessalonica and his fear concerning the persecution and strong opposition they were receiving, Paul sent Timothy to them to find out if their faith was strong and to encourage them in their suffering (vv. 1-5). Upon hearing the good news when Timothy had returned to him, Paul was filled with joy because of their love for him and their continued faith in the Lord. He prayed earnestly that he would be able to return to them in the near future to be with them and fill in the gaps that are missing in their faith (vv. 6-10). He closes the chapter with a pastoral prayer that the church would overflow with love for one another and present themselves blameless in holiness at the coming of the Lord Jesus (vv. 11-13). *If someone were to tell you that God promises a trouble-free life for Christians, how would you answer them? Is there anything you are struggling with right now? #1 p. 1543.*

I Thessalonians 4— Paul encourages the believers to learn how to live in a way that pleases the Lord. The first area of teaching to the church was the importance of living a life of moral purity. It is God's will that each person live a life of holiness recognizing that all who commit sexual immorality will be judged by God. A second matter of importance is for them to continue in brotherly love, to live a quiet, Christ honoring life before the outside world, and to work with their own hands so that they would not have to depend on anyone else (vv.1-12). Paul then addressed the question as to what would happen to those believers who had already died. He made it clear that though we will grieve for the passing of fellow Christians, we have the confidence that when Christ comes back both those who have died and those who are still living will be resurrected and caught up in the air to forever be with the Lord (vv. 13-18). *How is acting out sinful desires harmful to the believer? #3 p. 2048-9*

I Thessalonians 5— After revealing the coming of Christ for His saints (rapture), Paul then begins to speak of the timing of His second coming. He brings encouragement to the church by stating that they will not have to suffer the wrath of God when the Day of the Lord suddenly comes on the people of the world (vv. 1-11). The Apostle Paul ends his letter with exhortations on community conduct and relationships. We are to give our spiritual leaders proper recognition for their labor and care, as well as warning, comforting, helping, or showing patience to the believers in accordance to what each person needs (vv. 12-15). He then gives seven concise commands for our personal and community life (vv. 16-22). He concludes with a benediction expressing complete confidence that the God who started with the work of salvation at the moment they believed will finish the work of sanctification when Christ returns (vv. 23-28). *If we really believe in the reality of Christ's return, what are ways our lives will be affected?*

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Psalm 96, II Thessalonians 1-3, Isaiah 36-39 (#74)

Psalm 96 — This is a song declaring the glories of God to the nations and compelling us to do the same. *Why is God worthy to be praised (vv 4-6, 10, 13)?*

II Thessalonians— This letter is in response to confusion by the church of Thessalonica about the timing of the Lord's coming since they thought that Christ's return was imminent because of the increase in persecution. Furthermore, someone had written a letter using Paul's name saying that the Day of the Lord and Christ's coming had already taken place. Paul writes this letter to clarify the timeline of the events that must take place in order for the day of the Lord to come. He also encourages them to stand firm in the teaching he has given them and exhorts the church not to enable idleness or take care of the needs of those who will not work.

II Thessalonians 1— After his normal greeting, Paul commends the believers for their increasing love and great endurance in light of their persecutions and afflictions. God is just and righteous and will one day reward the believers with Christ's eternal kingdom and repay those who are afflicting them with everlasting destruction from the Lord's presence. Paul prays that God would consider them worthy of His calling and that they would receive power to accomplish all the good things their faith prompts them to do. Through all this may the name of the Lord Jesus be glorified, and may the saints likewise be honored at His coming. *How did Paul encourage the believers in this chapter who were suffering persecution?*

II Thessalonians 2— Because of the misinformation about the Day of the Lord and the coming of Christ for His church, Paul clarifies biblical teaching about the events that must take place first. The Day of the Lord begins with the appearance of the man of lawlessness (antichrist) who will show himself to be God and demand to be worshipped (vv. 1-4). Although the mystery of lawlessness has been working since Paul's time, a restraining force will be taken out of the way so that the lawless one, who operates under Satan's control and power, will reveal himself to the world. Those who rejected the truth of the gospel will be under a powerful delusion by the counterfeit miracles and wonders of the lawless one (vv. 5-12). Paul thanks God for these believers who were chosen by God to be saved and share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He encourages the saints to stand firm in the faith and hold to the teaching he has given them (vv. 13-17). *Who or what is the restraining force that is now holding back the appearance of the lawless one?*

II Thessalonians 3— As he closes his letter, Paul requests prayer that the gospel will spread rapidly and that all of them would be delivered from wicked men and the evil one. Even after a previous warning (I Thess. 5:14), those who were idle and not working persisted so Paul wrote an extended passage to address the problem of idleness and its solution. During his visit to Thessalonica, Paul set the example by laboring with his own hands so that he would not be an expense to anyone. He commanded the church that no one should associate or help financially those who would not work. *Why is idleness and laziness wrong?*

Isaiah— This truly is an amazing book written by a prophet who mainly served between 740 to 700 BC. The first half has 39 chapters that thunder judgment upon Israel for their idolatry and wickedness. The last 27 chapters are filled with comfort and hope because of the Lord's Servant who suffers and pays for the sins of the transgressors (53:1-12). Like Revelation 21 and 22, the book of Isaiah ends with the announcement of the new heavens and the new earth (66:22). Twenty-six times Yahweh is the "Holy One of Israel" who Isaiah sees high and lifted up (6:1-6). He predicted incredible prophecies about the coming Messiah such as the virgin birth (7:14), the various names and descriptions of the Messiah (9:6-7), the branch and root of Jesse (11:1-16), the coming of the Messiah to rule with Israel on the earth (40:1-31), and His substitutionary death for our sins (53:5-6). Non-biblical sources suggest that the writer of Hebrews was talking about Isaiah's martyrdom when it says he was "sawed in two (Hebrews 11:37b)."

Isaiah 36— In 701 B.C. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and his army of 185,000 attacked and captured all of the cities of Judah and now comes to Jerusalem to finish the task of complete victory over Judah. The Assyrian field commander, Rabshakeh, meets with King Hezekiah's representatives outside the gate of Jerusalem. The message that Rabshakeh gives to Hezekiah is one of the most insolent and blasphemous recorded in the Holy Scriptures. First, Judah is rightly rebuked because of their trust in Egypt who is described as a splintered reed of a staff. Secondly, he wrongly accuses Hezekiah of offending Yahweh for tearing down the high places and the altars to centralize all worship in the temple in Jerusalem. Rabshakeh shouts in the Hebrew language to the people listening on the wall that they shouldn't be deceived by Hezekiah's words and that the Lord will certainly deliver them. Then he asks this question, "Who of all the gods (of the other countries) has been able to save the land from me? How then can the Lord deliver Jerusalem from my hand (v. 20 NIV)." *Explain how Rabshakeh was misinformed about (1) the removing of the high places and altars in Judah by Hezekiah (v. 7), and, (2) that Yahweh, the God of Samaria (Israel) did not deliver them. Remember Assyria completely conquered Israel in 722 B.C.*

Isaiah 37— Upon hearing the arrogant words from Sennacherib's field commander, King Hezekiah tore his clothes in mourning and sent Eliakim and others to Isaiah to ask for his intercession and seek an answer from the Lord. The Lord responds to Hezekiah's plea by assuring him that He has heard the blasphemy of the king of Assyria and will act on their behalf. Therefore he and his people should not be afraid of the army of Assyria. When the king of Assyria put greater pressure on Judah to surrender, Hezekiah took the letter he received, and spread it before the

Lord, and fervently sought for deliverance. In his prayer he recognized the Lord as the sovereign ruler of the universe who alone deserved the honor and glory. In response to his prayer, the Lord speaks directly to Sennacherib's pride and arrogance by declaring his defeat and ultimate death. To Hezekiah, the Lord guarantees protection and deliverance for Jerusalem in order to bring glory to Himself and because of His servant David. That night the angel of the Lord came into the camp of Assyria and struck down 185,000 soldiers. *How did Hezekiah respond to the threat of Sennacherib, and what truths did he understand about God (see verses 14-20)?*

Isaiah 38-39— Chapters 38 and 39 take place before the invasion of Assyria (chapter 37) and 38:21-22 belong between verses 6 and 7 of chapter 38. Hezekiah is informed by the prophet Isaiah that he has an illness that will end in death and so must put his house in order. Upon hearing the news of his death, Hezekiah cries out to the Lord in prayer with bitter weeping reminding the Lord how he has faithfully and wholeheartedly served Him. God quickly answers his prayer, and extends his life 15 more years, and gives him a sign by having the sundial go back 10 steps. Hezekiah writes a psalm of praise showing gratitude for answered prayer and confessing his sins including pride. In chapter 39 Hezekiah succumbs to pride and shows to the envoys of Babylon all of the riches of Judah. Isaiah rebukes the king for his self-sufficiency and pride prophesying that in the future the armies of this far away country would take all the people and their riches, including Hezekiah's royal descendents, to Babylon. *In verse 22, Hezekiah asks for a sign that he will be healed and God gives it to him in verse 7 (see also II Kings 20:7-11). How does this contrast with the response of his father Ahaz to Isaiah (7:10-14). What does this verse say about Hezekiah, Ahaz, and God?*

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Psalm 97, Isaiah 40-45 (#75)

Psalm 97 — God's righteous and just reign is celebrated in this psalm. *What are we instructed to do in response to God's sovereign rule (see vv 10 - 12)?*

Isaiah 40— This amazing chapter speaks of God's future plan for Israel and the revelation of Christ's kingdom on the earth. Humankind and its rulers are seen as temporary at best and very quickly a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. On the other hand, the character and attributes of our awesome God are on display like almost no other chapter in the Bible. Yahweh is seen as the all powerful creator, the sovereign ruler, the tender shepherd, the wise counselor, and the everlasting God. The nations of the world who ignore the almighty creator are like a drop in the bucket, worthless, and less than nothing. The unsearchable God is able to give power to those who hope, trust, and wait on Him. *List the characteristics and attributes of God given in this chapter.*

Isaiah 41— The everlasting Yahweh alone is sovereign over history, and calls King Cyrus of Media-Persia to subdue the nations, and guides the events of each new generation from the beginning of history to the very end for His glory and purposes (vv. 1-7). The Lord assures Israel that she is His chosen servant to whom He promises His presence, protection, and strength (vv. 8-10). The Lord will subdue all their enemies, and they need not fear since their redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. Israel will rejoice in Yahweh because He will cause them to pulverize their enemies and will make the desert to overflow with bountiful streams and rivers, resulting in a worldwide declaration of God's power and sovereignty (vv. 11-20). The Lord is not like dumb idols but can tell future events as though it were history. As clear evidence of His omniscience, the Lord predicts the coming of Cyrus which is still more than 150 years into the future. No idol can predict the future or even give an answer but are empty as the wind (vv. 21-29). *What promises does God give to Israel in this chapter? Can we claim Isaiah 41:10 as a promise from God to our own lives?*

Isaiah 42— This chapter gives the first of four Servant Songs which refer to the Messiah, Jesus (also 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12). The passage in 42:1-4 is cited in Matthew 12:17-21. The Lord's Servant will be endued by the Holy Spirit and will bring justice to all the nations. In doing this, He will not be loud or raise His voice and will not quit until His mission is accomplished. The Servant Messiah will be a sign of God's covenant with His people, and He will be a light to guide the nations in order to open their eyes and free the captives from prison (vv. 1-9). Now all of the inhabitants of the earth, whether they live on the islands of the sea, the desert, or on the mountains and hills, will give glory to the Lord for He will no longer be silent but will rise up like a mighty warrior and lay waste the islands, mountains, and rivers (vv. 10-17). Israel, the unfaithful servant of Yahweh, received His severe judgments for their great sins and disobedience, yet they still did not understand, wake up, or take His discipline to heart (vv. 18-25). *Israel received God's judgments and discipline and was completely decimated but still did not understand and take to heart what God was trying to say to them. Is there any area in your life or the life of someone you know that God has repeatedly been trying to get your (their) attention but you (they) are unwilling to obey and respond to Him? Explain. What steps are needed to be taken to respond to God?*

Isaiah 43— Now God gives His assurance to Israel's believing remnant of His love, presence, and redemption after they pass through seventy years of deep waters and fires of persecution. Yahweh has called Israel to be His witness to the world of His power to choose, call, gather, and return them back in the land He has promised to them (vv. 1-13). Now God will do something new when He sends the Medes and the Persians against Babylon so that Israel can return into their land and be what God intended them to be. Yahweh has made Israel for Himself, and someday she will honor the Lord before the whole world during the Millennial Kingdom (vv. 14-21). Isaiah returns to the present time of his writing and sees that Judah is tired of God and is unfaithful in bringing sacrifices to Him. Although Judah has burdened Yahweh with its sins, He promises to blot them out for His own sake in the far future, but still in the near future they must suffer under His judgment in Babylon (vv. 22-28). *What do you think is the meaning of "I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you (ESV)" in verse 4b?*

Isaiah 44— The Lord chose and formed Jacob (the deceiver) from birth and now calls this nation "Jeshurun" (the upright one) with a promise to help them, prosper them, and pour out His Spirit on them (vv. 1-5). The Lord gives His strongest indictment ever against those who make and worship idols. They exchange the Almighty Creator of

the universe for a piece of wood that is used to make fires to cook food and warm themselves. With the same piece of wood they carve and shape an idol and bow down in front of it saying, “You are my god, rescue me!” “Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think. The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, ‘Why, it is just a block of wood (vv. 18-19 NLT)!’” Yahweh, in patience and love, forgives and redeems His chosen nation and promises to restore the ruins of Israel. About 150 years before it happened, the Lord chose Cyrus, the King of Persia, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and return the nation of Israel to their homeland (v. 28). *What counterfeit gods do people trust and worship today to give them protection, happiness, and fulfillment? Why is it just as foolish today to trust these rather than the true God? #6 p. 303.*

Isaiah 45— Through the inspiration of the Lord, Isaiah writes a letter more than 150 years before it is delivered to King Cyrus of Media-Persia so that he would recognize that he is anointed by the Lord and that all of the success he is having in subduing nations has happened so that he will rebuild the city of Jerusalem and set the Jewish exiles free to return to their own land. The Lord called Cyrus by name, although he did not know God, so that He could demonstrate to him and the whole world that He is the only God, the Creator of earth and mankind (vv. 1-13). It seems that in the rest of the chapter the Lord looks forward to the millennial reign of Christ on the earth when the nations of the world will come and bow down to Yahweh, the God of Israel, and recognize His superiority and absolute sovereignty. The God and Creator will not only give eternal salvation to Israel, but the whole world will be invited to look to Him in faith and be saved. Some day every knee will bow down and swear allegiance to Yahweh declaring that the “the Lord is the source of all my righteousness and strength (vv. 14-25 NLT).” *Reading verses 3 to 6, what are the reasons that God gave Cyrus and his army continuous victory?*

Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups . c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV. 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion c.2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc. Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc. Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009, David C. Cook. 9. Halley’s Bible Handbook, c. 2000, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 10. 500 Questions & Answers from the Bible, c. 2006, Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Understanding the Bible c. 2000, Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Homan Bible Handbook, c.1992, Homan Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 13. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL.

Psalms 98-99, Isaiah 46-52 (#76)

Psalm 98 — This psalm helps us to remember that God loves to rescue his people. *How has the LORD rescued you?*

Psalm 99 — The psalmist reminds us that our omnipotent God provides both forgiveness and discipline when we go astray. *What were the sins of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel? See Exodus 32:35, Numbers 20:10-12 & 1 Samuel 15:11,35;16:1*

Isaiah 46— Unlike Bel and Nebo, the gods of Babylon, who were heavy burdens for the animals that carry them in the annual parades, the Lord carries and sustains the house of Jacob from their birth until old age. No one can compare to God or make Him their equal because He can declare the end from the beginning, His plans will take place, and He will bring about what He has spoken. *Who is Isaiah speaking of when he said in verse 11, “I call a bird of prey from the east, a man for my purpose from a far country?” Why did he say “bird of prey?”*

Isaiah 47— Now the prophet says it is payback time for the Virgin Daughter Babylon for all her heartless, cruel, and evil acts she perpetrated on her enemies, especially upon Israel with whom she showed no mercy. Babylon lived for luxury and security with no thought of anyone else, believing that disaster would never happen to her, but in one day she lost her children and became a widow. She trusted in her own wisdom and cunning, in her sorceries and astrologers, but none of them could save her. *What do we learn about the spiritual beliefs and practices of the Babylonians from verses 9-13? #1 p. 940. Are any of these beliefs practiced today in our sophisticated world?*

Isaiah 48— Even though the people of Israel say that Yahweh is their God, the fact is that their lives are not built on truth and righteousness. They are a stubborn and stiffnecked people who have been rebels from birth, but God will still rescue them for His own name's sake and will not share His glory with idols or people (vv. 1-11). The Lord, who founded the earth, who spread out the heavens above with His right hand, says that He loves Cyrus who will accomplish His will against the Chaldeans and will succeed in His mission (vv. 12-16). The Lord longed that in the days of old, Israel would have paid attention to His commands so that they could have experienced peace like a

river, righteousness like the waves of the sea, and with countless more descendants that would not have been cut off (vv. 17-19). Now they are to leave Babylon with a shout of joy proclaiming, “The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob!” Israel can trust God to take care of them as He did during their 40 years in the wilderness, but those who are wicked will never find this new era of peace (vv. 20-22). *Who are the wicked that Isaiah is talking about in verse 22? What do we really need to do to find peace in our lives?*

Isaiah 49— Verses 1 to 13 show us the second of the **Servant-songs** of Isaiah and tells of the mission and success of the Messiah. This passage reveals to us that the Messiah is a human being called to be Yahweh’s servant who, although at times is discouraged by the difficulty of his calling, will not only restore Israel back to their God but will also be a light and salvation to all the nations. Although despised and rejected by the nations, at the proper time the Kings and rulers of the earth will bow down and worship Him. The servant is said to be God’s covenant to His people and becomes a new Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-17) who mediates the New Covenant to Israel as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and leads the prisoners out of captivity back to the Promised Land (vv. 1-13). Israel laments that the Lord had deserted them but God responds, “Can a mother forget her nursing child?” Yahweh will never abandon her and promises manifold blessings for her future after this time of chastisement. The exiles of Israel will return to the land, and God will miraculously provide and protect them from their wicked enemies so that all the people of the earth will know that the Lord is their Savior and Redeemer (vv. 14-26). *In verses 1 to 7, what does it say about the person, mission, struggles, and success of the Servant of the Lord?*

Isaiah 50— The Lord states that Israel was taken into bondage to Babylon because of their own transgressions even though Yahweh had the power to deliver them as He did in Egypt long ago (vv. 1-3). Verses 4 to 11 is the third **Servant-song** which speaks of the Servant’s determination to do the Lord’s will in spite of suffering and persecution. He persevered in His obedience to Yahweh in the face of severe opposition by fully trusting in God for complete vindication and thus, in God’s timing, He would put His enemies to shame (vv. 4-11). *What lessons about obedience in doing the will of God in the face of suffering can we learn from the Servant of the Lord in this passage? See verses 4-11, John 5:19, Hebrews 5:8.*

Isaiah 51— The Lord comforts His people who seek Him with a message of hope and encouragement, and with a promise that His righteousness and salvation will last forever (vv. 1-8). **Wake up** and recognize that we need to put

on the same strength of God's power that He displayed against Egypt and will be exhibited in Israel's return to Zion in a second exodus where gladness and unending joy will prevail (vv. 9-11). The Israelites who are under captivity of Babylon should not fear dying men who are powerless but trust in their omnipotent God, the creator of all things. God promises to come and set the captives free, to protect them, and provide for them (vv. 12-16). For the second time the Lord urges them to **wake up** and recognize that it was Yahweh who caused them drink the cup of fury because of their great wickedness, but now He will remove the bowl of affliction and wrath. This cup of staggering will forever be removed from them and be given to their tormenters (vv. 17-23). *What are three incentives the Lord gives to His people so that they can obey Him and pursue righteousness? See 1-3, 4-6, 7-8.*

Isaiah 52— For a third time Zion is told to **wake up!** After the slavery of Egypt, Assyria, and now Babylon, Israel is to rise from the dust, remove the chains of slavery, and sit in a place of honor (vv. 1-6). What good news and great joy there is in the return of the captives of Israel to Jerusalem! "The Lord has demonstrated His holy power before the eyes of all the nations. All the ends of the earth will see the victory of our God (v. 10 NLT)." This return will not be in a hurry because the Lord will protect them as He goes before them and as He also becomes their rear guard. The ultimate fulfillment of the promises of this chapter will happen when the Messiah rules on earth during the Millennial Kingdom (vv. 7-12). Now comes the fourth and last of the **Servant-songs** and depicts the redemptive work of the Messiah. "Here is a summary and preview of the humiliation and exaltation of the Servant described in more detail in 53:1-12. The details cover the work of Christ in His substitutionary death, His burial, His resurrection, His saving of sinners, His intercession, and His kingdom." #2 p.1013. *Verse 7 says, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation...(NIV)." To whom do you need to give the Good News of the salvation of Christ? Name the people in your life you need to speak to including those from your family, work, neighbors, and friends. What are some steps you need to take to do this?*

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