

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO SECOND ISAIAH

Differences Between First and
Second Isaiah

Differences between Isaiah 1-39 and 40-66 are reflected in historical background, language, style, and theological outlook. These differences were first noted in 1167 by Rabbi Ibn Ezra who denied that Isaiah of Jerusalem was author of chapters 40-66. Later, the German scholars Eichhorn (1783) and Döderlein (1789) designated the unknown author of chapters 40-66 as Deutero-Isaiah (a second Isaiah). Numerous nineteenth century scholars called attention to the differences between the various sections of the Book of Isaiah.

Historical background

Attention has already been called to the fact that the historical setting of chapters 1-39 was about 150 years earlier than that of chapters 40-66. The first section deals with the Assyrian threat in the latter part of the eighth century when Sargon and Sennacherib led the Assyrian Empire. The second section belongs to the period of the Exile which is dated from the first deportation in 597 B.C. to the Edict of Restoration by Cyrus of Persia in 538 B.C. Some scholars have concluded that the references in chapters 56-66 to the restored Temple (after 520 B.C.) means that the latter part of the book was written in the post-exilic period.

S.R. Driver states that the common theme throughout chapters 40-66 is Israel's restoration from Babylonian exile.¹ Sargon and Sennacherib, the Assyrian rulers, do not appear to have been a threat to Jerusalem in this section. The end had come to Assyria with the fall of Nineveh to the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C. After Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.) defeated Pharaoh Necho in Carchemish in 605 B.C., the Babylonians were undisputed rulers of the world.

King Jehoiakim of Judah was forced to become Nebuchadnezzar's vassal (see 2 Kings 24:1). Jehoiakim revolted against the Babylonians and, thereby, brought on an invasion by Nebuchadnezzar. The Judaeen king died in the battle and was replaced by his son Jehoiachin. Jerusalem was forced to surrender after

¹An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, 4th edition (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1892), p. 217.

Place an X by the correct endings.

Four areas of differences which have caused scholars to divide Isaiah into two books are:

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|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <u> </u> 1. length | <u> </u> 4. language |
| <u> </u> 2. style | <u> </u> 5. historical background |
| <u> </u> 3. theological outlook | |

(2-X, 3-X, 4-X, 5-X)

Continue reading the next paragraph before doing the following exercise.

Match by drawing lines.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. First Isaiah | a. Assyrian threat in the eighth century |
| 2. Second Isaiah | b. Restoration from Babylonian exile |

(1— a, 2— b)

When did the end come to Assyria?

(The end came to Assyria in 612 B.C.)

three months, and three thousand of its citizens, including the king, were deported to Babylon in 597 B.C. Zedekiah was placed on the throne of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. He yielded to pro-Egyptian influence and eventually rebelled against Babylonia in 588 B.C. on the promise of aid from Egypt. The revolt brought another invasion from Babylonia, and Jerusalem was finally captured and destroyed in the fall of 587 B.C. Thousands of her leading citizens were then exiled to Babylonia. Gedaliah, a Jew of noble birth, was made governor of Judah. His assassination in 582 B.C. by a radical group, that refused to accept defeat, resulted in a third deportation of Jews. Other Jews escaped to Egypt.

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son Evil-merodach (562-560 B.C.), who released Jehoiachin from prison (see 2 Kings 25:27-30). Evil-merodach was assassinated by a military officer who died four years later. The throne was seized by Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.). He retired to his desert fortress at the oasis of Teima in the Arabian desert in 552 and left the government in the hands of his son Belshazzar (see Dan. 5:1). Nabonidus' withdrawal meant neglect of Marduk, the patron god of Babylon. The king was expected to give leadership in the religious festivals honouring Marduk. Nabonidus also became alienated from the Jewish exiles whose prosperity turned to suffering during the latter part of his reign. They rejoiced when he was defeated by the Medes and Persians.

In 550 B.C., Cyrus II (558-530 B.C.) successfully revolted against his Median overlord with the help of Nabonidus. A few years later, Cyrus turned against Nabonidus, who had established new alliances with Lydia and Egypt. Cyrus defeated Lydia in the winter of 546 B.C. The Jewish people rejoiced in his victory and hoped that he would next defeat the Babylonians and release them from bondage. This hope is reflected in Isaiah 40-55. Cyrus was the "righteous man from the east" whom Yahweh raised up. Yahweh delivered up nations to Cyrus "and made him rule over kings" who became like dust before "his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow" (Isa. 41:2). Isaiah called him the Lord's shepherd (44:28) and Yahweh's anointed (45:1). These terms did not mean that Cyrus was a devout worshipper of Yahweh, but Israel's God was able to use him to accomplish His purpose in history—the defeat of the Babylonians and the return of the exiles to Palestine (see 48:14-15, 20).

Cyrus succeeded in defeating the army of Nabonidus in the fall of 539 B.C. Since his policy was to treat conquered people with consideration, he permitted them to rebuild their altars and to restore their religious traditions. In 538 B.C., he issued the famous Edict of Restoration which permitted the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland and to rebuild their Temple. Not all of the Jews, however, were eager to leave Babylonia and return to the ruins of Jerusalem and the desolate countryside. Many families had become

List the dates of the three deportations of Jews to Babylon.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(597 B.C., 587 B.C., 582 B.C.)

True or False?

1. The Jews did not want Cyrus to defeat the Babylonians. _____
2. Isaiah called Cyrus a righteous man whom Yahweh raised up. _____
3. God could not use Cyrus to accomplish His purpose in history. _____
4. Isaiah referred to Cyrus as the Lord's shepherd and Yahweh's anointed. _____

(1. False, 2. True, 3. False, 4. True)

Rewrite the following statement to make it correct.

In 537 B.C., Cyrus issued the famous Edict of Restoration and all the Jewish exiles returned to their homeland.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

prosperous in Babylonia and were not anxious to give up their comforts for hardships.

The initial group returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of "Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah" (Ezra 1:8), perhaps the son of King Jehoiachin. His place was soon taken by Zerubbabel who led in the rebuilding of the Temple. This work was delayed for eighteen years but finally was completed, and the Temple was dedicated in 515 B.C. Many scholars believe that the historical background to Isaiah 56-66 is the post-exilic period between the first return under Sheshbazzar in 537 B.C. and the completion of the Temple in 515 B.C.

Theological issues in Second Isaiah

The Jews' exile caused a number of questions to arise concerning their God. If Yahweh was the Creator of the world, why had He permitted His people to be defeated by nations which worshipped idols? A common standard for measuring the strength of a god in Isaiah's day was the success of the army of a nation which worshipped him. Yahweh's people had been defeated; therefore, by the established standard Israel's God was weak. Did the defeat of Israel and Judah mean that Yahweh is inferior to the gods of other nations? Does Yahweh really control history to accomplish His plan and purpose for His people, or is He impotent in the face of historical developments? Even though Israel had sinned, why had Yahweh used people with greater sin to punish her? The prophet who was inspired by God to speak the messages contained in Isaiah 40-66 gave answers to these questions. His God was not weak, but Yahweh had a plan which was not understood by the world. He made His plan known to the prophet who gave the message to the people.

The question of a third Isaiah

As previously mentioned, some scholars believe that Isaiah 56-66 was the work of a third person who, along with the author of Isaiah 40-55, was a leader of the Isaianic school. Since the purpose of this study guide is to understand the message rather than to resolve critical problems, little attention will be given to arguments for and against a third contributor to the body of material. It seems sufficient to recognize the distinctive literary style and historical background of chapters 1-39 and 40-66 without further fragmenting the book.

The historical references

Isaiah 44:28 mentions the Persian king Cyrus (558-530 B.C.) who was rising in power as a world leader. Jerusalem lay in ruins (44:26). The Babylonians had utterly wasted the walls, buildings, and Temple of Jerusalem in 587 and 582 B.C. The Israelites were a captive people in exile (45:13), but Babylon was about to fall (see ch. 47). These historical circumstances give a date of about 545 B.C. to the message of Second Isaiah.

Yes or No?

Did Zerubbabel lead in the rebuilding of the Temple? _____

Was the Temple dedicated in 515 B.C. ? _____

(Yes, Yes)

Three primary questions reflect the theological issues in Second Isaiah. List these three questions.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The following historical circumstances give a date about 545 B.C. to Second Isaiah.

Cyrus of P _____ was rising to p _____.
Jerusalem lay in ruins. The Israelites were a
e _____ people in e _____.

(Persia, power, captive, exile)

The purpose of Second Isaiah

Isaiah of Jerusalem had predicted in the eighth century that Jerusalem would be destroyed because of the sins of the people (see Isa. 5:24ff.; 10:5ff.; 29:1ff.; etc.). The prophet had been instructed to seal his predictions in a book in order that the rebellious people who mocked his words would know when the event came to pass that the Lord had spoken to him. Isaiah also predicted the rise of a future king who would rule in righteousness (11:1ff.; 32:1ff.; etc.). After almost two centuries, many of Isaiah's predictions had come to pass, thus establishing the word spoken through Isaiah and manifesting that Israel's God was in control of history. However, the people who had suffered during long years of exile had not interpreted correctly Yahweh's working in history; they had become discouraged and had concluded that Yahweh was unable to deliver them. Israel had suffered severely at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians. The prophet who saw that many of the eighth-century Isaiah's predictions of judgement had been fulfilled was called upon to proclaim a message of comfort to the oppressed and suffering people. The day of their judgement would soon be over; their warfare had ended. They had received double punishment for all their sins (40:2). They would be released from captivity and restored to their land.

Underline the correct word or words.

Isaiah was to proclaim the message of (destruction, comfort) and the assurance that the suffering people (would be, would not be) released from captivity and restored to their land.

(comfort, would be)

PART II: THE GREATNESS OF ISRAEL'S GOD

Isaiah 40:1-45:13

Yahweh's Power to Save

Isaiah 40:1-31

A call to comfort (40:1-11).—Judah's punishment was drawing to a close, and the time was approaching when Yahweh would forgive the people and restore blessings to her (vv. 1-2). The message of Isaiah to Jerusalem in the eighth century was judgement and punishment, but the message of Second Isaiah was comfort and salvation. The people were assured that the days of their bondservice (warfare) were at an end (v. 2). The prophet did not conceive of Judah's defeat as political misfortune or military weakness but as a penalty for sin. Yahweh had forsaken His people and left them to the enemy who took them into exile. After their sins had been removed, He would return to them and restore them to the Land of Promise. The celestial voice summoned angelic ministers to prepare a highway for the return to Jerusalem (v. 3). The restoration of exiles from many foreign countries would mean the return of Yahweh Himself to Jerusalem. Ezekiel had described Yahweh's departure from the doomed city (11:22-25).

The prophet spoke of a route straight across the desert between Babylonia and Palestine. Valleys were to be raised and mountains to be levelled to make it easy for God's people to return (v. 4). The removal of physical hindrances was an analogy of the removal of

Read the section A call to comfort before doing the following exercise.

True or False?

- 1. Isaiah explained Israel's defeat as political misfortune and military defeat.*
- 2. The exiles' return to Jerusalem would mean that Yahweh Himself was returning to Jerusalem.*
- 3. Israel's defeat was not due to sin.*
- 4. Israel's release from captivity would demonstrate Yahweh had accomplished the deliverance since it had been predicted that He could accomplish what He promised.*
- 5. Yahweh forsook His people and permitted the enemy to take them into captivity.*

(1.False, 2.True, 3.False, 4.True, 5.True)

spiritual hindrances. Since the people had suffered sufficiently for their sins, there were no spiritual barriers to their return under the leadership of God. In their deliverance from the Babylonians and restoration to Palestine, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (v. 5). The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, and there could have been no question in the minds of the Egyptians, the Israelites, nor any others that their deliverance was the work of God. Likewise, Judah's weakness in captivity made it impossible for her to escape Babylonian control through her own power. It would be obvious at the time of her restoration that her God had accomplished the feat. In addition, "the mouth of the Lord" had spoken through the prophet Isaiah of Judah's restoration, and these words had been recorded for later evidence that Yahweh could accomplish what He promised.

Judah's weakness in captivity was compared to grass and flowers of the field which wither and fade (vv. 6-7). In contrast to man's weakness, the Spirit of the Lord is powerful. Man is weak and temporal, but the word of God is enduring and eternal (v. 8). The prophet had no message when he looked on man's weakness; therefore, he inquired what should he cry (v. 6). The voice pointed him to God who is powerful and eternal and whose word endures for ever; he was to proclaim God's word and not his own.

The return of the exiles to Zion (Jerusalem) meant that God had returned to the Temple: "Your God is here" (v. 9, NEB). He would bring peace and protection not only to Jerusalem but to the surrounding cities. The deliverance and restoration of the exiled people manifested the kind of God Judah worshipped: "Behold your God!" (v. 9). The redeemed became evangelists to share with the surrounding cities the good news of what God was doing. The Lord, whose strength enabled Him to rule His people and protect them from the enemy, brought back His "reward" and "recompense"—His people whom He had earned for Himself (v. 10). It was He who had gently gathered His scattered flock back to Jerusalem (v. 11).

God's saving power (40:12-17).—The people in captivity were sceptical of the prophet's message. Their defeat and long captivity made deliverance seem impossible. Who would be able to liberate them? The prophet used a series of rhetorical questions to emphasize the greatness of God and to assure the people that He would be able to deliver them. The only answer to the questions was "No one!" No human being could possibly measure the waters of the seas in the hollow of his hand, measure the heavens, or weigh the mountains; but Israel's God was Creator of the waters, the heavens, and the earth (v. 12).

Yahweh derived none of His power or wisdom from man; therefore, His greatness is not to be compared to any achievement of man (v. 13). Israel's kings

What did the voice tell the prophet that the prophet's message should be?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

The return of the captives to Jerusalem meant that God had returned to the T_____. God would bring peace and protection to Jerusalem and the _____.

(Temple, surrounding cities)

Underline the correct word.

The people in captivity (were not, were) sceptical of the prophet's message. Their defeat and long captivity made deliverance seem (possible, impossible).

(were, impossible)

had failed, but Yahweh could not be compared to an earthly king. Babylonia's defeat of Israel demonstrated her power and implied the greatness of her god and the weakness of Israel's God. Man, however, had not understood the plan and purpose of God. The Babylonian victory was not the result of God's weakness but because of His righteousness—His punishment of Judah for her sins (v. 14). Actually, Babylonia and other nations were no more than drops of water or dust particles in comparison to Yahweh who could take up islands as though they were dust (v. 15). No number of sacrificial offerings is adequate to match His greatness even if all the forests of Lebanon were cut for the fire and all the beasts became burnt offerings (v. 16). Rather than Babylonia's victory demonstrating her greatness and superiority to Yahweh, she was as nothing before Yahweh (v. 17).

The Babylonians interpreted their victory over Israel to mean:

1. *Their god was powerful and Israel's God was _____.*

They did not understand that their victory was because of God's righteousness--His _____ of Judah for her sins.

(weak, punishment)

God's incomparable nature (40:18-26).—How could God's greatness be described or to what could it be compared? (v. 18) Could Yahweh be properly represented by an idol or image? Many of the surrounding nations had made their gods out of gold, silver, and wood (vv. 19-20). The core of the idol was often made out of base metal, or even wood, which was overlaid with beaten gold. The poor man was not even able to afford such elaborate images. Judah's God, who sat enthroned beyond the circle of the earth, who stretched out the heavens like a curtain, and who reduced rivers to nothing, could not be formed out of a piece of wood which rots (vv. 21-23).

The greatness of God is indicated by the expanse of His creation. "The circle of the earth" (v. 22) implies the roof of the earth and reflects that day's concept of the universe. A dome or canopy rested over the earth to keep out the waters of the great deep in order that man might have a place to multiply on a dry earth. Ancient people described the heavens as a place where God hung the stars, the sun, and the moon to give light to man. God existed outside the world order.

The prophet's description emphasizes that man is too small (like a grasshopper) to understand God, who is too great to be comprehended by man (v. 22). God is so great that the storm is described as His breath which blows men about like stubble (v. 24). God who created man cannot be compared to an idol which man makes with his own hands (v. 26). The verb for create occurs twenty-one times in chapters 40—66. Isaiah concluded that the greatness of Israel's God was based on the doctrine of creation. The Babylonians believed that the stars were gods which controlled the destinies of men. Isaiah asserted that the God of a captive nation created the gods whom the captors worshipped.

God's infinite knowledge (40: 27-31).—The prophet realized that the exiles might conclude that the God who existed above the circle of the earth and who ruled the stars would be unconscious of man's situation. Isaiah informed the people that none of their actions were

Continue reading the following paragraph before doing this exercise.

The prophet used three arguments to describe God's greatness. List them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

disregarded by God. He was aware of their plight in exile, and He had the power to do something about it. Yahweh is everlasting and the Creator of all the earth (v. 28). Their concept of God had been entirely too small. He is more than a national deity or an item made with human hands. He is able to give strength to the faint (v. 29). He does not become weary nor deplete His supply of energy but is able to impart great strength to those who turn to Him. Those who worship or wait upon Yahweh and look to Him for life will not become weary or tired (vv. 30-31). Youths may appear to soar with the wings of the eagle in the beginning, but later in life they may slow down to a run and eventually to a walk in old age. Those who live by faith in the Lord continually renew their strength and do not become weary with age.

The Greatness of Israel's God

Isaiah 41:1-29

Most people of Isaiah's day believed that there were many gods. The gods of the conquering nations were regarded as the chief gods. Chapter 41 represents Yahweh as speaking (in the first person) as He called for an assembly of all nations to interpret history. What did the events in Israel's life reveal about her God?

Invitation to the nations (41: 1-4).—The nations were invited to assemble and determine who had given Cyrus the power to become a world ruler (v. 1). It was Yahweh who had raised up the leader in the east and had given him victory in every battle, disposing of the nations before him and trampling kings under foot (v. 2). Yahweh, who two centuries before had used Assyria to execute His plan of punishment, asserted that He had raised up Cyrus to carry His plan further (v. 4). Israel's God was in control of history, determining the actions and accomplishments of each nation (v. 4).

A comparison of Yahweh to idols (41: 5-20).—With the approach of Cyrus, the people of smaller nations trembled with fear (v. 5). Since their protection rested in idols, the craftsmen encouraged the goldsmiths to fashion new gods which were to be fastened to their positions with nails so that they could not be removed (v. 7). Their efforts, however, were in vain because no idol could stop Cyrus. Israel, on the other hand, had no need to fear because the Creator of the heavens and the earth was her God (v. 8); He had chosen Israel and had not cast her away (v. 9); Cyrus was unconsciously a servant of Yahweh and Yahweh would give His chosen servant power over her enemies (v.10). Abraham was Yahweh's servant (see Gen. 26:4), and he received great blessings and prosperity. Israel was Abraham's offspring and could expect like treatment. Israel was assured that she would not be put to shame by her enemies; rather her enemies would be put to shame and confusion because Israel continued to be the elect of Yahweh (v. 11). Exile did not mean the end of God's Covenant with His people. His Covenant

Isaiah informed the people that none of their actions were d _____ by God. He was aware of their p _____ in exile. He had p _____ to do something about it. Yahweh is e _____ and the Creator of all the earth.

(disregarded, plight, power, everlasting)

Yes or No?

Did most people of Isaiah's day believe there was only one God? _____

(No)

List three reasons Israel did not need to fear the conquest of Cyrus.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

continued with the righteous remnant which survived the judgement.

A term frequently used in Isaiah to refer to Israel is "my servant" (see 41:8-9; 42:1, 19; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21, 26; 45:4, etc.). Israel's, or Jacob's, past experiences of weakness ("thou worm Jacob", v. 14) were no indication of what her God would do for her in the future. The people who had been as weak as worms would be turned into a threshing sledge which crushed the enemy (v. 15). The threshing of the mountains and the hills and the carrying away of the chaff by the wind probably refer to the nations that were obstacles to God's people (vv. 15-16).

A great hindrance to the return of the exiles from Babylonia to Jerusalem was the desert which made the journey difficult. The poor and needy would seek for water and find none, and their tongues would be parched with thirst (v. 17). The prophet answered that Yahweh would not forsake them but would provide water on the barren heights even as He had provided water in the wilderness during the flight from Egypt (v. 18). Actually, He would do more; He would open rivers on the treeless heights and springs in the valleys. The desert would become a permanent oasis. Yahweh's adequate provision for His people would manifest His greatness (v. 20).

A challenge to the nation (41:21-29).—The prophet based his assertion of Yahweh's superiority on His knowledge of the future. Other nations' gods were challenged to demonstrate their ability to interpret the significance of contemporary events (v. 22). Then they were challenged to predict what would happen in the future (v. 23). Only Israel's God knew the future because He controlled it. The heathen gods were invited to perform some act, either good or bad, in order that the people might know that they were gods (v. 23). The idols could not respond to the challenges; therefore, they were nothing and their works were nothing (v. 24). Those who chose to worship idols chose that which was loathsome.

In contrast to idols which could not bless or harm, Yahweh raised Cyrus from the north to trample on rulers (v. 25). The prophet was so bold as to declare that Cyrus would call upon the name of the Lord. Idols were unable to interpret the reason for Cyrus' success in conquest, but Yahweh could explain it. Yahweh controlled Cyrus' actions; Cyrus was given success for the sake of Zion—to restore her people (v. 27). None of the nations responded to the challenge to predict future events or to interpret the significance of contemporary events (v. 28). Since they could not predict or interpret correctly, the molten images were nothing (v. 29).

The Servant of Yahweh

Isaiah 42:1—43:7

The first Servant Song (42:1-4).—Four Servant Songs appear in this section of Isaiah (42:1-4; 49:1-6;

In the exiles' difficult return across the desert, Yahweh promised that He would not _____ them and would provide _____.

(forsake, water)

True or False?

The gods of other nations could not perform any action, either good or bad, to prove they were gods. _____

(True)

Why was Cyrus given success?

(Cyrus was given success for the sake of Zion—to restore her people.)

Read all of the topic The first Servant Song before doing the exercises on the next page.

50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12). The first one describes the righteous remnant of Israel as the servant of Yahweh whom He had chosen (v. 1). "In whom my soul delighteth" provided the second phrase of the heavenly voice's statement at Jesus' baptism: "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11; Matt. 3:17). The first part comes from Psalm 2:7. The statement communicated to Jesus that the promised Messiah and the Suffering Servant roles would be combined in His ministry.

Isaiah stated that the servant received the Spirit of God which enabled him to bring justice to the nations (see also Isa. 11:2). The descent of the Spirit of God upon Jesus at His baptism gave further evidence that His ministry included the role of the Isaianic servant. This verse further points out that the servant's ministry would include the Gentile nations. Although the servant was identified as Israel in Isaiah 41:8-9, the application of the Scripture was not limited to Israel but came to its highest meaning in Jesus Christ.

Since the servant would bring justice to the nations, perhaps he should be understood as a vassal-king who served Yahweh by bringing the nations into subjection to the will and law of God. His ministry was established by the power of God's Spirit; therefore, it was unnecessary for him to cry out in distress during crises as his predecessors had done (v. 2). His ministry was not to destroy but rather to establish the righteous law of Yahweh (v. 3). He would not be defeated until He had established justice in the earth which would result in peace (v. 4).

The servant's commission (42:5-17).—Some scholars think that verses 5-9 are inseparable from the preceding and should be treated as part of the first Servant Song. The verses contain a commission to God's elected servant. God is presented as the Creator of heaven and earth, the Sustainer of mankind, and the One who gives the power of life by His Spirit (v. 5). The idols of Gentile nations were believed to give victory in war and some provisions in life, but they were not considered to be creators of all people. The mission assigned to the servant by the Creator and Ruler of all the earth was to be a "covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles [nations]" (v. 6). People and nations are parallel expressions.

The purpose of a covenant was to establish relations between two parties. The servant's task was to make known the righteousness of Yahweh and thus enlighten the understanding of the Gentiles concerning Yahweh's covenant requirements. In its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, verse 6 means that the Servant, as "a covenant of the people," provided the righteousness required by the covenant by giving Himself. Originally, Israel was chosen as God's agent to make the covenant relationship known to all the nations. In order to be "a light of the Gentiles," it was necessary for Israel to walk in obedience to Yahweh's word and acknowledge publicly His blessings through worship.

The four Servant Songs appear in

Isaiah _____, _____,
 _____, _____.

(42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12)

Three emphases of Isaiah 42:1-4 which related to Jesus' baptism and ministry are:

1. The heavenly voices' quoting of v. 1 communicated to Jesus that the promised M _____ and Suffering S _____ roles were combined in His ministry.
2. Jesus received the S _____ which enabled Him to bring j _____ to the nations.
3. Gentile nations were included in the S _____ ministry.

(1. Messiah, Servant; 2. Spirit, justice; 3. Servant's)

Place an X by the correct ending.

The servant's responsibility in the covenant relationship was—

1. to see that the covenant was worshipped in the Temple. _____
2. to make known the righteousness of Yahweh and thus enlighten the understanding of Gentiles. _____

(2-X)

Those who did not know the one Creator were blind and imprisoned. They walked in unrighteousness and experienced poverty and insecurity because their idols could not help them (v. 7). They would be delivered from blindness and imprisonment to a life of righteousness by coming to know Yahweh through His servant Israel. If Israel failed to make known the name of Yahweh (the self-existent, eternal, omnipotent, and only God), the Gentiles would continue walking in darkness and worshipping images which were worthless. The glory of the only true God could not be transferred to graven images (v. 8). An indication of Yahweh's superiority over idols was His ability to make predictions of new things (v. 9). He is the God who controls history and can bring to pass what He determines.

The prophet broke forth into song as he contemplated the blessings in store for the world when Yahweh was recognized as the only true God (vv. 10-13). Yahweh would be praised from the end of the earth, and even nature would join in the singing of hymns of glory. The hymns of praise would be spontaneous because joy would fill the earth.

The prophet predicted that Yahweh's silence (voice and acts) would be broken (vv. 14-17). Yahweh had deliberately held His peace while His chosen people turned to idolatry and were taken into captivity. The time had arrived for Yahweh to break the silence and to demonstrate His power. Conquering nations had concluded that Israel's God was weak and helpless. Actually, the Gentile nations had succeeded because Yahweh had deliberately restrained Himself. When He broke His silence and intervened in history on behalf of His people, His strength would be demonstrated by the laying waste of mountains, the turning of rivers into islands, and the drying up of the pools of the enemy (v. 15). In contrast to His treatment of His foes, Yahweh would bless His people by leading the blind along familiar paths, changing darkness into light, and preparing level ground for their return from exile (v. 16). Those who trusted in Him would be set free, but those who trusted in idols would be put to shame (v. 17).

Former blindness of the servant (42:18-25).—

Before her captivity, Israel as the servant had heard the word of the Lord but had not understood or heeded it (v. 18). Israel as Yahweh's servant had been chosen to bear His message to the nations, but the messenger was deaf and blind (v. 19). God's plan was for Israel to experience Yahweh's blessings and to share her experiential knowledge with Gentiles who worshipped idols. Israel had been shown many things, especially during the deliverance from Egypt and the wilderness journeys, but she had failed to hear and understand the meaning of them (v. 20). At Mount Sinai, Israel had been given Yahweh's law, which He magnified and made glorious as man's responsibility in the covenant relationship (v. 21). The people, however, had disregarded the law which specified that

Underline the correct word.

If Israel (failed, succeeded) in making known the name of Yahweh, the Gentiles would (continue, cease) walking in darkness and worshipping images which were (useful, worthless).

(failed, continue, worthless)

The prophet broke forth into s _____ as he contemplated the blessings in store for the w _____ when Y _____ would be recognized as the only true G _____.

(song, world, Yahweh, God)

Explain Isaiah 42:14-17 in as few words as possible.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Israel, as Yahweh's messenger, was described as deaf and dumb because she was—

- 1. blind to what Yahweh had done for her in E _____.*
- 2. deaf to His _____.*

(1. Egypt, 2. law)

they were to worship only Yahweh and not turn aside to idolatry, robbery, and immorality. The law stipulated the requirements of Yahweh's reign, and that reign was to be extended to other nations. Since the servant had failed to establish the law in other nations, the servant himself became the victim of the Babylonian's breaking of the law; the Israelites were robbed, plundered, and imprisoned (v. 22). The implication of the prophet was that the servant would not have been mistreated by Gentile nations if he had been obedient previously in bringing those nations to a recognition of Yahweh and His law. Idols of foreign nations had not brought about Israel's defeat, but Yahweh had delivered her to her foes because of her sin (v. 24). The victory of the servant's foes was not due to the superiority of their gods but because Yahweh was expressing His anger towards His disobedient people (v. 25). The servant had been set on fire, probably a reference to the burning of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (v. 25).

The hour of redemption (43:1-7).—The time of discipline and punishment would pass, and the hour of redemption would arrive (v. 1). The previous verses spoke of the servant's punishment by defeat in battle. The servant's redemption would mean his restoration from captivity. Knowing Israel by name meant that Yahweh knew her intimately. Not only her name but her actions were known, and Yahweh was present to protect her from every danger (v. 2). Fire and water represented the obstacles Israel would encounter on her homeward journey.

Although God is not called Saviour in Isaiah 1—39, the term is used at least eight times in Second Isaiah. The reference to Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba (Cush) has been interpreted to mean that Yahweh would give these countries to Cyrus in return for the liberation of the Jewish exiles. The prophet's emphasis was that Israel's Saviour will pay any price to secure the freedom of His people (vv. 3-4). With the Creator on the side of the helpless exiles, they had no need to fear, for He had the power to deliver and restore His people from every nation (vv. 5-6). The very name of Israel meant "prince of God"; thus every Israelite was "called by my [God's] name" and was to bring glory to Yahweh's name through worship and service (v. 7).

Israel's Witness to the Nations

Isaiah 43:8—44:23

Israel's task and message (43:8-13).—The prophet depicted a courtroom scene in which the Jewish exiles who were blind to God's purposes and deaf to His words would be summoned (v. 8). The Israelites had eyes to see, yet were blind; that is, they had experienced Yahweh's works but had closed their eyes to their responsibilities to Him. The Gentile nations were also summoned to present evidence that their gods were truly divine (v. 9). The proof was to be based upon their ability to disclose the meaning of past events and to predict future events. Since Yahweh had delivered the Israelites, they would be qualified witnesses that He

True or False?

1. *The law stipulated the requirements of Yahweh's reign that was not to be extended beyond Israel.* _____
2. *The implication of the prophet was that Israel would not have suffered at the hands of the Gentiles if she had been obedient in bringing those nations to Yahweh.* _____
3. *Because Israel had not established the law in other nations, she became the victim of the Babylonian's breaking of the law.* _____

(1. False, 2. True, 3. True)

Yahweh's punishment and forgiveness of Israel's sin was related to historical events. His punishment was by the use of the B _____ a _____ to defeat Israel, and His forgiveness was expressed in r _____ from c _____.

(Babylonian army, restoration, captivity)

is the only God (v. 10). The testimony of the nations would fail because their lifeless idols were not gods: "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (v. 10). Only Yahweh was a deliverer (v. 11). He declared through His prophets that He would deliver His people when they turned from idolatry (v. 12). The decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C., which permitted the Jews to return to Palestine and rebuild the Temple, was proof that Israel's God had power to deliver and keep His people. His plan had been announced previously through the prophets, and no man could hinder His work (v. 13).

The specific nature of Yahweh's redemption (43:14-21).—For the sake of His people, Yahweh would bring about the defeat of the Babylonians (Chaldeans, v. 14). Babylon is named for the first time in the prophecy. The deliverance from exile is described as a new exodus (vv. 16-21). Yahweh had previously delivered His people from Egypt through the Red Sea in which the mighty Egyptian army was destroyed (vv. 16-17). The people had stumbled in the wilderness for forty years, but Yahweh would do something new during the second exodus: He would make a roadway in the wilderness and provide rivers in the desert (vv. 18-19). It would be so obvious that the blessings were from Yahweh that even beasts would honour Him (v. 20). What God would do for His chosen people would manifest His nature, and people would respond by praising Him (v. 21).

The justification of punishment (43:22-28).—God's past punishment of Israel was justified because of her sin. Although He had entered into a covenant relationship with His chosen people, they did not fulfil their responsibility of calling upon Him as God (v. 22). They could not have continued their sacrificial worship during their exile, and Yahweh had not burdened them with the sacrificial system. The Israelites had turned aside to idol worship and had neglected the sacrificial ceremonies which honoured Yahweh (v. 23). In contrast, Israel had continued in sin and had burdened or wearied Yahweh with her iniquities (v. 24). Neither did she merit redemption. Instead, God's forgiveness was based on His grace; because of His own nature, He does not remember sin (v. 25). Yahweh's grace is contrasted to Israel's unfaithfulness. When the two sides of the court case were presented, it was obvious that Israel's actions were wrong and that she deserved judgement (vv. 27-28). In contrast, Yahweh's gracious forgiveness was undeserved and portrayed His loving nature.

The promise of a new spirit (44:1-5).—"Jacob my servant" and "Israel, whom I have chosen" are parallel expressions. Jacob, the father of the Israelites, was a transgressor (supplanter) from the beginning, but he and his descendants were chosen of Yahweh. Rebekah, wife of Isaac, was barren until Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife (see Gen. 25:21). The Lord enabled her to bear twins of which Jacob was

Place an X after the correct ending.

The Israelites would know that Yahweh controlled the actions of Cyrus because--

1. *Cyrus' advisors announced it. ___*
2. *Yahweh's plan had been announced previously through the prophets. ___*

(2-X)

True or False?

1. *Deliverance from exile is described as a new exodus. _____*
2. *The people would be without water and would stumble on their way. _____*

(1. True, 2. False)

God's past punishment of Israel (was not, was) justified because of her (sin, obedience). Yahweh's gracious forgiveness (was not, was) undeserved and portrayed His loving nature.

(was, sin, was)

God's elect from the time of his miraculous conception (see v. 2). The servant is addressed as Jeshurun (or Jesurun), perhaps meaning upright (v. 2). In the New Age, Israel would be blessed with adequate rainfall for the thirsty land and an outpouring of God's Spirit which would assure further blessings (v. 3). Both blessings were symbols of life-giving power. Just as streams of water in the desert cause grass to flourish, so Yahweh's blessings would cause the exiles to multiply, and the name of the nation would become great. The multiplied blessings would make it obvious that Israel belonged to Yahweh (v. 5).

The incomparability of the one God (44:6-23).— Before Second Isaiah, the prophets had stressed that Israel was to worship only one God, but they did not specifically deny the existence of other gods as represented by idols. Second Isaiah contains strong expressions of monotheism. In chapter 43, the prophet emphasized that there is only one God with none made before and none coming after Him. Again, he emphasized that the King and Redeemer of Israel is the only God who has ever existed (v. 6). Proof of God's reality lay in His ability to guide history according to His predictions (v. 7). Since there is only one God who has created all mankind, Israel as His servant was responsible to share this knowledge with all the nations (v. 8).

Those who made idols were mere men; therefore, the gods were less than the men who made them (vv. 9-10). In addition, all who worshipped the idol would be put to shame—their foolishness would be exposed since the idol would be unable to answer their prayers and give protection (v. 11). The ironsmiths and carpenters who made idols were subject to hunger and weakness. The prophet implied that the idol could be no stronger than its maker (vv. 12-13). The materials of which idols were made also revealed their weaknesses. Some idols were fashioned out of cedars or oaks. The part of the tree which was not used for the idol was used by man for fuel to warm himself (vv. 14-15). The material for the idol was no more valuable than the wood which a man gathered to bake bread (v. 16). Idolatrous men worshipped wooden idols which could be destroyed by burning (v. 17). The idolator was deceived if he thought ashes could deliver him from his enemies or could forgive his sins and redeem him from bondage (vv. 18-20).

In contrast to idols, Israel's Redeemer had forgiven her sins and had delivered her from her enemies (vv. 21-22). Since Yahweh is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and the Redeemer of His people, all things in heaven and on earth are called upon to praise His name (v. 23).

Cyrus as an Agent of Redemption

Isaiah 44:24—45:13

God's purpose revealed in history (44:24-28).—

Yahweh identified Himself as the Creator and Deliverer (v. 24). The One who created man would also deliver him.

List two promises of Yahweh concerning the New Age.

1. _____
2. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Read down to the section Cyrus as an Agent of Redemption before doing the following exercise.

Match.

- | | | |
|-----------|-------|--|
| 1. Yahweh | _____ | a. made by men |
| 2. idols | _____ | b. ability to guide history according to predictions |
| | _____ | c. made from wood |
| | _____ | d. forgives sin |
| | _____ | e. brings deliverance |

(1-b,d,e; 2-a,c)

He would cause the diviners, those who attempted to interpret history, to be exposed as foolish (v. 25). These verses imply that certain diviners used omens to predict that Jerusalem and Judah would not be inhabited again. They scoffed at the message of Isaiah who predicted the restoration of Jerusalem (v. 26). The mockers did not understand the plan of God to use Cyrus to achieve His desires (v. 28). Since Cyrus was not a Jewish leader, the people of the nations could not understand how he could be used by Yahweh. He supposedly performed his deeds in the name of Marduk. The passage comes to a climax with the announcement that Cyrus was the shepherd through whom Yahweh's purposes would be fulfilled (v. 28).

Verse 26 implies that Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were not inhabited at the time of the prophecy. Verse 28 predicted that both the city and the Temple would be rebuilt. The prophet made great theological advancement in recognizing the great power of Yahweh who could use a pagan ruler to carry out His purposes.

God's plan for Cyrus (45:1-8).—Cyrus was described as Yahweh's anointed who would be able to subdue the nations before him because Yahweh's power had been given to him (v. 1). Yahweh's taking the right hand of Cyrus signified the power bestowed upon him. "His anointed" means his messiah. This is the only place in the Old Testament where the term is applied to someone outside the covenant community. It usually applied to priests and kings of Israel. The expression teaches that Cyrus was chosen as God's agent to carry out His plan. As God's anointed, Cyrus would be given the power to overthrow kings. Yahweh's blessings to Cyrus would include hidden treasures (v. 3), and Cyrus would come to recognize that they came from Yahweh, Israel's God. Yahweh's blessings (military victories and plunder) upon Cyrus were for the sake of Yahweh's servant Jacob and His people Israel (v. 4). The Lord's purpose was to deliver captive Israel through the defeat of Babylon by Cyrus. The strong monotheistic conviction of the prophet is expressed a third time in verse 6. He concluded that, if there is only one God, everyone from the east to the west should know Him. As Creator, everything in the universe was attributed to Him (vv. 7-8).

God's unchallengeable sovereignty (45:9-13).—Apparently some of the prophet's contemporaries questioned the inspiration of his message which proclaimed Cyrus as divinely anointed. He reminded the sceptics that they had no right to question their Maker (v. 9). The clay vessel is not privileged to rebuke or instruct the potter who made it. A second illustration is that, normally, a child does not murmur against his parents for not having made him different (v. 10). The Holy One of Israel always does right. Since He is the Creator, His children lack the dignity and status to question Him (v. 11-12). Because of the unlimited

Why did the diviners scoff at Isaiah's message that Jerusalem would be restored?

(Their omens predicted that she would not be restored.)

Why did the people reject Isaiah's message that Cyrus would be used of Yahweh to restore Jerusalem?

(They could not understand how Yahweh could use a non-Jewish leader to accomplish His will.)

Yes or No?

Would Cyrus ever come to recognize that his power came from Yahweh? _____

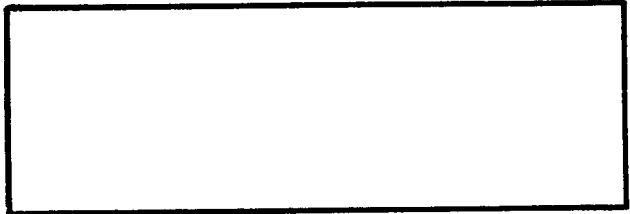
(Yes)

List two illustrations the prophet used against those who challenged his message of God's sovereignty.

1. _____
2. _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

power of God who has created all that exists, including Gentiles, He has the authority to use Gentiles to accomplish His purpose. It was Yahweh who moved Cyrus to action, and He would make the ways of Cyrus straight (v. 13). Cyrus would liberate the Jews without ransom, and he would assist in the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.



Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. List four differences in the two sections of Isaiah which have caused scholars to divide the book into two. _____

2. State the major difference in historical background to First and Second Isaiah. _____

3. List three deportations of the Jews in the Babylonian captivity. _____

4. When were the Jews released from captivity and what was their response? _____

5. List three primary questions which reflect the theological issues in Second Isaiah. _____

6. List four historical references in Second Isaiah which help date it. _____

7. Give the primary purpose of Second Isaiah. _____

8. What explanation did the prophet give to Israel's defeat in captivity? _____

9. How did the Babylonians interpret their victory over Israel? How had they misunderstood God's purpose? _____

10. List three arguments the prophet used to describe Yahweh's greatness. _____

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-
11. What challenge of the prophet could the nations not meet? _____

 12. List the references for the four Servant Songs. _____
 13. Give three emphases of Isaiah 42:1-4 which relate to Jesus' baptism and ministry. _____

 14. What was the servant's responsibility in the covenant relationship? _____

 15. Briefly interpret Isaiah 42:14-17. _____

 16. Why was Israel as Yahweh's servant described as deaf and blind? _____

 17. How were Yahweh's punishment and forgiveness of Israel's sin related to historical events? _____

 18. Interpret Isaiah 43:16-19. _____

 19. List two promises of Yahweh concerning the New Age. _____

 20. Give three arguments for Yahweh's superiority to idols. _____

 21. Give two reasons why Isaiah's message of the restoration of Jerusalem was scoffed. _____

22. Why was Cyrus called Yahweh's appointed? _____

23. What two illustrations did the prophet use against those who challenged his message of God's sovereignty? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3)

Read pages 86-116 in The Book of Isaiah, by Wright, and answer the following questions.

1. What is "explicit monotheism"?
2. How does Jewish exegesis interpret the servant?
3. Define eschatology. What eschatological doctrines are found in Isaiah 40-66?
4. What themes are the prophecies of Second Isaiah built around?

Advanced activity (Level 3)

1. Explain the use of the word servant in Isaiah and tell what his mission is.
2. Make a list of Isaiah's criticisms of idolatry.
3. Discuss the concept of saviour as taught in Second Isaiah.

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the proposition: Second Isaiah gives the first clear statement of monotheism in the Old Testament.
2. Do people still ask the same questions about God which the Jews in exile asked?
3. Why does Isaiah speak of Israel as a servant?
4. What are the themes used in Isaiah 40-66?
5. What doctrines does Isaiah give that would help in witnessing to animists, Moslems, Hindus, Spiritualists, etc.?