1:2 ‘Heaven and earth’ are used here to describe a whole system of things; maybe the ‘heavens’ refer to the leaders of Judah, and the ‘earth’ the ordinary people. Verse 10 addresses the rulers and ordinary people separately in keeping with this. When we read in other Scriptures of the ‘heavens and earth’ being destroyed, we have to understand this figuratively, as referring to an entire system of things, human society- rather than the literal Heaven, which is God’s dwelling place, and the earth, upon which He intends to establish His eternal Kingdom at Christ’s return.

1:7 *Is desolate... are burned*- But this hadn’t yet happened at the time Isaiah was prophesying. But so certain was God’s word of fulfilment that he could speak in the present tense. We likewise should try to envisage prophesied future things as if they effectively are now- and live accordingly.

1:9 *We would have been as Sodom*- But v. 10 speaks to them as if they *are* Sodom. They were as Sodom to God, but for the sake of the faithful remnant, He wasn’t judging them as Sodom. This shows how faithful third parties can have a huge effect upon the destiny of an unspiritual mass of God’s people- so sensitive is God to the righteousness of even one man, as exemplified supremely in the achievement of Christ’s work for us.

2:2 ‘Mountains’ are used figuratively in the Bible to refer to kingdoms. Here we have a prophecy of the future establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth, centred on Jerusalem. The Bible teaches the literal return of Christ to earth to establish God’s Kingdom here, rather than the righteous going to Heaven at death.

2:5 In view of the great future hope of God’s Kingdom, God’s people should in this life live in the spirit of it, and walk in God’s light now as they will eternally.

2:7 The reference to silver, gold, horses and chariots recalls God’s forbidding of Israel to trade with other nations in order to get these things, lest they become proud and fear Yahweh alone (Dt. 17:16-20). They did exactly that- and became proud, which is the very reason God wanted to destroy them as this chapter explains in such a repeated manner. Wealth and human strength lead to pride and idolatry- that principle is just as true today. Yet we can so easily seek those things, and the worldly associations through which they can apparently be acquired... Yet humility is of the essence, and this comes from being forced to trust in God alone.

2:20 In the day of Christ’s return, bank accounts, property, investments etc. will be totally irrelevant, indeed people will seek to dissociate themselves from such things. Yet we live in the presence of God’s glory and majesty every day of this life, if only we would perceive it.

3:9 *The look of their faces testify against them. They parade their sin*- God’s intense awareness of and sensitivity to human behaviour extends even to His noticing of their body language (see too :16). Out of all the many things for which He could have condemned His people, He focuses on pride. Pride is simply so extremely abhorrent to God. “Testify against them” is legal language- their own body language as it were stands up in court in the witness box and condemns them, and in this sense they “brought judgment upon themselves”. It is they rather than God who ask for the sentence of condemnation. He as the final judge arises to proclaim the verdict (:13), but it is Judah who have asked for it. Judgment is in this sense ongoing; it’s not that God will only open the books and consider our case at Christ’s return. Our own behaviour right now is the statement of the witness in the box, with God right now making the judgment and assessing that witness (:13).

3:16 Again, God notices and condemns the body language of people, so closely does He analyze human behaviour and so hypersensitive is He to any human pride; see on :9.

4:5 The allusion is to the pillar of cloud and fire which led Israel through the wilderness. Israel’s history, like our personal lives, is a wilderness journey, led by the Angel in the cloud and fire; but finally the pillar comes to rest, over Jerusalem.

5:3 *Please judge between Me and My vineyard*- At times, God invites us to judge Him (see Rom. 3:4). We may find this idea of putting God in the dock to be inappropriate and something we shy away from; but every time we doubt that in fact God has created an ideal environment for our bearing of spiritual fruit, this is in fact what we are doing.

5:4 God has done absolutely everything possible so that we His vineyard brings forth fruit. We need to remember this when we complain that if only this or that situation would be different in my life, then I could bring forth far more fruit to God. Jesus based His parable of the vineyard on this song (Mt. 21:33-41). But He concludes it rather differently. Instead of the vineyard being destroyed, the workers (the Jews) are destroyed in judgment and the vineyard is given to other workers (the body of Christ). But the same fruit is required of us as it was from them- justice and righteousness towards others (:7). In these very two things, we exalt God if we exalt the lowly by giving them justice (:16).

5:5,6 This describes how Judah was trampled by invaders and left waste for 70 years whilst Judah were in captivity in Babylon. God’s hope was that the vineyard would again be fruitful at their return, but it wasn’t.

5:9 *In my ears*- Isaiah spoke publically what God had spoken in his ears. The spirit of the prophets should be our spirit in our testimony for Jesus (Rev. 19:10). Jesus confirms this by telling *us* that what *we* (like Isaiah) hear in the ear, we are to openly proclaim (Mt. 10:27). It must’ve been hard and counter-instinctive for Isaiah to proclaim his message to a people who generally didn’t want to hear nor have their comfort zones invaded- just as it is for us.

5:13 *For lack of knowledge*- This “lack” was a moral issue, not an intellectual one. To ‘know’ God doesn’t mean to amass theory, but to not follow the selfish materialism criticized in the previous verses.

5:15,16 Humility exalts God; this paradox is found throughout the Bible, supremely in the exaltation of the supremely humble Jesus to the greatest height.

5:26 The Gentile nations situated at the end or borders of Judah came and attacked her from their own motives, but ultimately God was using them and had called them to come and do His work of judgment. Total unbelievers are in God’s hand and are moved around the board of life by God in relation to His intentions for His people.

6:1 In Isaiah 6:1-4 we have a vision of “the Lord high and lifted up", enthroned in the temple, with an earthquake, the temple filled with smoke, the doorposts that held up the veil being shaken (with the implication that the veil falls; 6:4). Rev. 15:5-8, building on this passage, has the veil being removed, the Most Holy opened, and the temple filled with smoke. This sends the mind straight to the rending of the temple veil at the crucifixion and the earthquake (Mt. 27:51). The Lord “high and lifted up" is a phrase that occurs later in Isaiah (52:13), concerning the crucified Lord Jesus, lifted up and exalted “very high" by the cross. John 12:37-41 tells us that Isaiah 6 is a prophetic vision of the Lord Jesus in glory; and in this passage John quotes both Isaiah 6 and 53 together, reflecting their connection and application to the same event, namely the Lord’s crucifixion. When Isaiah saw this vision he was convicted of his sinfulness, as we should be before the cross: “Woe is me, for I am undone...". And yet the same vision comforted him with the reality of forgiveness, and inspired him to offer to go forth and witness to Israel of God’s grace. The vision of the cross convicts men of their sin, and yet inspires them to go forward in service. Rev. 4:9 alludes to the Isaiah 6 vision, and applies it to the future judgment. Yet silhouetted within the vision of the judgment throne is a slain lamb (Rev. 5:6), as if before the judgment, all will be aware of the Lord’s sacrifice. The accepted will utter praise immediately after realising the wonderful verdict pronounced for them- in terms of praising the Lord Jesus for his sacrifice, and recognising their eternal debt to the blood of His cross (Rev. 5:9). The cross and the judgment and reward are connected. In Jn. 12:31,32, in the same passage in which Isaiah 6 and 53 are connected and applied to the crucifixion, He Himself foretold that His death would be “the judgment of this world". Whenever we come before the cross we come before our judgment, and therefore self-examination at the breaking of bread service is natural.

7:12 False humility is as obnoxious to God as human pride.

7:14 This prophecy is applied to the Lord Jesus, the final “Emmanuel” [‘God with us’] in Mt. 1:23. But clearly the prophecy had a primary fulfilment in the time of Isaiah (perhaps in 8:3,4). God’s prophecies could be validated by those who first heard them, because they would have a fulfilment in their times (Dt. 18:22), but they also often had their major fulfilment in far distant times.

8:6 *This people have refused the waters of Shiloah*- Referring to how Isaiah had stood by the gentle waters in 7:3 and urged them not to fear the Syria-Ephraim confederacy but trust in God, who for all their sins was prepared to deliver them from that threat. Yet instead they tried to find salvation from it by human means. Because of this, God was going to go ahead and bring the Assyrians upon them as He had initially planned. Notice that although He had threatened to do this from the start of Isaiah’s prophecy, He gave them a potential way out by asking them to trust in Him and not fear Ephraim’s threatened invasion. But they failed that test.

8:18 *I and the children whom Yahweh has given me*- This applies not only to Isaiah’s natural children but to his “disciples” who formed a school of prophets who also preached God’s word to Judah (:16). Yet this is quoted in Heb. 2:13 as a proof that Christ is of the same nature as us. We are therefore invited to see Isaiah here as a type of Christ, and us as that small group of supporters who assisted him in teaching God’s word to a generally unresponsive people. We too are to be people of sign to those around us.

8:20 This is to be our attitude too- we are to assess the claims of others by how far they are in harmony with God’s word. By turning to His word in this way, we are ‘consulting with our God’ rather than men (:19).

9:2 Quoted in Mt. 4:13-16 about how Jesus began His ministry in the areas of northern Israel which were most despised by devout Jews for being associated with Gentiles. God loves working in this way- firstly revealing Himself to those despised by others.

9:6 For to us a child is born- This must have had some primary fulfilment in the promised son of sign who had been promised in Isaiah’s time in previous chapters (7:14; 8:3). This son was to be known as ‘God with us’, ‘Immanuel’, but this didn’t make him God Himself in person. The major fulfilment of the prophecy in Jesus likewise doesn’t make Him to be God Himself. His *name* was to be called “Wonderful, Counsellor, Divine Warrior”; Jesus as God’s Son carried God’s Name (Jn. 5:43), and therefore all the titles of God can be applied to Him. The list of titles here seems borrowed from the traditional titles of the rulers of the surrounding nations. The point was that Messiah was to be Israel’s true king, reigning on God’s behalf and carrying His Name and authority.

9:7 Christ will rule “on the throne of David” in the sense that His Kingdom on earth will have a literal centre in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Lk. 1:31-35).

9:12 *With open mouth*- The nations surrounding Judah are here likened to a beast; when we later read of a dramatic beast in conflict with God’s people in the last days, this may also refer to a confederacy comprised of the nations which surround Israel.

10:7 *He doesn’t mean so*- Unbelieving people and entire nations can be controlled by God to do His purpose, but their hearts are far from consciously realizing the role they are playing. Assyria was used by God to punish various Gentile nations and also Judah to some extent, but when he went too far and thought he would destroy the Jerusalem temple because Yahweh was merely another idol who couldn’t withstand his strength (:11-13)- then God punished him. Truly all things are for our sakes as God’s people (2 Cor. 4:15), and God even watches and disciplines those unbelievers who play a role in our lives if they intend to go further than what God has intended. His level of involvement in human life is awesome. We need to remember that in those times when we may feel God to be distant and uninvolved.

10:20 *Will no more again lean on him who struck them*- God’s people had a bizarre habit of worshipping the very idols which their enemies worshipped. Any worship of this world’s idols is just as bizarre, but in the heat of our human situation, we don’t see the absurdity of it as we should.

10:22 This is quoted in Rom. 9:27 and the remnant is interpreted as the minority of Israel who would believe in Christ. Always God works with relatively small numbers. Israel were one of the smallest of the nations in their world, and yet God chose them; and yet out of them, He finally worked only with a remnant. In the context of Romans 9, Paul also appears to understand God’s definition of a remnant here as meaning that they were a remnant only by grace; as if even our correct belief and living before God is to some degree a result of His gracious calling.

10:25 *My anger will be directed to his destruction*- God’s anger isn’t emotion out of control. His anger was against Judah, and He was using Assyria to punish them; but He can assure His people that soon that anger will be redirected against the Assyrian, and He will save Jerusalem itself, although the rest of the land of Judah would be conquered- :28-30 describe the Assyrian advance through the other cities of Judah. Even whilst angry with Judah, God felt sorry for them- hence “You poor Anathoth!” (:30). In wrath He remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2).

11:1 Jesus was the branch whose root was in David, son of Jesse; He was a literal descendant of David through Mary (Acts 2:30). He therefore couldn’t have personally pre-existed before His birth of her.

11:2 These words were clearly true of Christ (Lk. 4:18).

11:4 The descriptions of how Christ in His life and future Kingdom would bring justice to the poor is set within the context of Isaiah’s repeated condemnation of Judah for not doing justice to the poor (3:14; 10:2). He would be an embodiment of all that God’s people ought to have been; had they followed God’s commandments, they could have been His Kingdom on earth. But they failed, as we do. Therefore Christ is presented as the essence of God’s Kingdom, it’s even one of His titles (Lk. 17:21). If we want to understand what the Kingdom of God will essentially be like, we must look at the character of Christ. If that’s not what we wish to be in ourselves 24/7, there will be no point in our being in His Kingdom. But if we long to be like that, and for the whole world to be as Him, then the coming Kingdom of God is truly good news for us.

11:9 A clear prophecy of God’s future Kingdom to be established on earth under Christ’s rulership- and not in Heaven.

12:6 *The Holy One of Israel is great in the midst of you*- God Himself personally, perhaps manifested through His Son but perhaps in person, will ultimately dwell literally in Jerusalem.

13:1 Prophesying like this against a city like Babylon would’ve been as bizarre as declaring that the world’s great cities such as London, Moscow or New York will soon become deserted wasteland because God is angry with their pride (:19). Isaiah’s faith, and that of his hearers, would’ve been sorely tested in preaching and believing this message; just as our proclamation of Christ’s return is a challenge to our faith when we consider its’ real implications for our current world.

13:12 *I will make people more valuable than fine gold*- The value and meaning of persons will be the principle which is to be enforced upon this earth by the destruction of all those systems which mean otherwise.

13:13 Heavens and earth are used figuratively here to describe a system of things- see on 1:2. There is nothing imperfect in Heaven which needs judgment or destruction.

13:20-22 Much has been made of the fact that the historical site of Babylon has been deserted for long periods. But there have been attempts to rebuild it at times and some dwelling there. This prophecy must therefore have its final fulfilment when Christ returns, which suggests there will be a literal Babylon in existence, persecuting God’s people as did the historical Babylon. Perhaps the fall of Babylon at Christ’s return which is described in Revelation has a literal element to it. Bible students therefore watch the situation in Iran and Iraq, the areas of historical Babylon and Assyria, with great interest.

14:12 It is assumed by some that Lucifer was once a powerful angel who sinned at Adam’s time and was therefore cast down to earth. This isn’t Biblical. The words “Devil”, “Satan” and “angel” never occur in this chapter. This is the only place in Scripture where the word “Lucifer” occurs in some translations. There is no evidence that Isaiah 14 is describing anything that happened in the garden of Eden; if it is, then why are we left 3,000 years from the time of Genesis before being told what really happened there? Lucifer is described as being covered in maggots (:11) and mocked by men (:16) because he no longer has any power; so there is no justification for thinking that Lucifer is now on earth leading believers astray. Why is Lucifer punished for saying, “I will ascend into heaven” (:13), if he was already there? Lucifer is to rot in sheol [the grave] (:11). Seeing angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35,36), Lucifer therefore cannot be an angel; the language is more suited to a man. It wasn’t until Milton’s *Paradise Lost* that the term ‘Lucifer’ took on any connotation of ‘Satan’ or a force of evil in secular thinking. Isaiah 13–23 is a series of “burdens” on various nations, e.g. Babylon, Tyre, Egypt. 14:4, sets the context as being a parable against the king of Babylon. The prophecy is therefore about the human king of Babylon, who is described as the morning star. He is clearly defined as a man in :16, a king like any other king (:9,10). In the parable, this star proudly decides to “ascend (higher) into heaven...exalt my throne above the (other) stars of God” (:13). “The stars of God” can refer to the leaders of Israel (Gen. 37:9; Joel 3:15; Dan. 8:10). Because of this, the star is cast down to the earth. The star represents the king of Babylon. Daniel chapter 4 explains how Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon had a pride which reached unto heaven (Dan. 4:.22). Because of this made as an animal (Dan. 4:33). This sudden humbling of one of the world’s most powerful men to a deranged lunatic was such a dramatic event as to call for the parable about the falling of the morning star from heaven to earth. Stars are symbolic of powerful people (Gen. 37:9; Is. 13:10; Ez. 32:7). Ascending to heaven and falling from heaven are Biblical idioms often used for increasing in pride and

being humbled (Job 20:6; Jer. 51:53; Lam. 2:1; Mt. 11:23. Is. 14:8 records the relief that now the “Lucifer” figure would no longer cut down cedars in Lebanon and hew mountains. This is exactly the language used by Nebuchadnezzar: “What no former king had done, I achieved: I cut through steep mountains, I split rocks, I opened passages and constructed a straight road for the transport of cedars... To Marduk, my king, mighty cedars... The abundant yield of the Lebanon”. Clearly the figure spoken of in Is. 14 was Nebuchadnezzar. 14:12 says that Lucifer was to be “cut down to the ground” – implying he was a tree. This provides a further link with Daniel 4:8–16, where Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are likened to a tree being cut down.

15:5 *My heart cries out for Moab!-* Isaiah was emotionally caught up in his message. Having prophesied how Moab, the enemy of his people, would weep and cry out, Isaiah starts crying for them. Like God, he had no joy in the death or judgment of his enemies. He grieved at any person who turns against God, even if they were his personal enemy. The message of Christ’s return is also a message of judgment on this earth, and we must ask ourselves whether we have ever cried tears for the lost? See on 16:7.

16:7 *Moab will wail for Moab*- And yet Isaiah the Jew wailed for Moab too, such was his identity with and grief for the lost; see on 15:5.

16:9 Therefore I will weep with the weeping of Jazer- Jazer was part of Moab, so Isaiah is saying that he wept as the Moabites did, so much did he identify with the tragedy of his enemies’ position. See on 15:5; 16:7; 21:3; 24:16.

16:10 *I have made the shouting stop*- Isaiah here recognizes the awesome power of the inspired words he was declaring, and felt identified with God to a very deep extent.

16:12 *He will not prevail*- Prayer is here likened to a struggle, as in Hos. 12:4. It’s not a mindless uttering of familiar words and phrases, but real, focused engagement with the mind and heart of God.

17:4 *The glory of Jacob will be made thin*- The context of this section has been a series of prophetic burdens condemning various Gentile nations. And now Isaiah turns to God’s people with a message of judgment, as if to make the point that they are no better than the sinful world around them.

17:13 *Chased like the chaff*- This is the language of Dan. 2:35,44 concerning what will happen to all Gentile nations at Christ’s return and the establishment of His Kingdom on the ruins of the kingdoms of men. The fearsome awfulness of that day (:14) must never cease to be part of our thinking; with the result that we beseech people to become part of God’s true Israel.

18:7 The intention of all God’s judgments is that some will repent, drop their pride and come to identify with Him and His people. His judgments aren’t therefore the outpouring of the uncontrolled anger of an irritated deity, but they are spiritually constructive in their ultimate intent. We see this too in the smaller experience we have of Divine judgment for our sins in this life.

19:2 God can give a community the spirit of division as a sign of His judgment (also in :14), and so a divided community is one which is displeasing to God. If we seek, create and glorify division, we are effectively making ourselves worthy of God’s condemnation.

19:3-13 This passage speaks of how Egyptian wisdom is in fact foolish, and will be declared as such in Egypt’s final judgment; and how God will thereby destroy the wisdom of this world, for Egypt is a symbol of the world. Paul surely had his mind on this passage in 1 Cor. 1:19,20, where he speaks of just the same principles; that God will bring down the wisdom of this world, and that worldly wisdom is foolishness with Him (as in Rom. 1:22). What the world will learn only when it’s too late, we are to learn now. This is not an appeal to any spirit of anti-intellectualism in itself, but rather the simple teaching that what is worldly wise and smart is foolishness with God; and acts and attitudes of faith which may appear foolish in the eyes of the world, are in fact the true wisdom.

19:21 This prediction that the Egyptians will finally turn to Israel’s God hasn’t yet been fulfilled; it therefore awaits its’ fulfilment around the time of Christ’s return.

20:6 *The inhabitants of this coast land*- The people of Judah. God speaks in a very positive way of how He believes that His people will cease trusting in Egypt after seeing Isaiah’s graphic portrayal of how the Egyptians were to be led captive. Yet as later Isaiah makes clear, His people didn’t ‘get it’; they continued trusting in Egypt rather than in God for salvation from their enemies. Yet God speaks as if they will positively respond. This reflects His hopefulness (as in Mt. 21:37). In this we see the hopefulness of God, and this should be our spirit in our witness to others, preaching with a sure hope in response, as the shepherd who goes looking for the lost sheep in the spirit of searching until it is found (Lk. 15:4).

21:3,4 Isaiah’s emotional grief for those outside of God’s people as he spoke of their judgment is really impressive- see on 16:9.

21:4 What would have been pleasure for Isaiah- that the great enemy of His people was to be judged- became awful for him as he realized the tragic human destruction it involved. Strangely, he achieved identity with Belshazzar king of Babylon, who likewise had his evening of pleasure broken up by fear- see on :5. Unconsciously, we too can achieve identity with the objects of our witness if we have a true heart for people as Isaiah did.

21:5 This is exactly the situation of Daniel 5, where Belshazzar has a feast, sees the writing on the wall, and then suddenly there was a cry that the Medes had attacked and taken the city.

21:12 *“What hour of the night will it come?”. “Turn back again.”*- The exact timing of the fulfilment of God’s prophecies is dependent to some extent upon human response. The ending of the night of judgment for these people would be when they turned back, i.e. repented. The morning might come, or the night might continue- it depended upon their response. The same idea is found in Acts 1:7,8; Mk. 13:28-33, where the answer to the question ‘When will Jesus return?’ is basically: ‘Preach to Israel; lead them to repentance. That’s when the Lord Jesus will return’.

22:8 *He took away the covering of Judah*- God’s judgment makes a person naked (Hos. 2:3; 7:1; Rev. 16:15). Now is the time to see ourselves as we really are before God, rather than have to be stripped of all appearances at the final day of truth.

22:10,11 This appears to refer to the preparations made by Hezekiah against the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 20:20). Yet God perceived that the hearts of the people who did the work did it thinking that this piece of human ingenuity would save them rather than their faith in God. Hezekiah, whose initiative it was, appears to have acted with faith in God. We see therefore how within a group of people apparently doing the Lord’s work, God perceives some may do it in faith in God, seeing the work as merely a means to an end, of His deliverance; whereas others trust in the work itself with no faithful heart.

22:13 *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die*- Quoted by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:32 as the attitude we may as well have if we have no hope of resurrection to eternal life. Exactly because we will *not* die eternally, we are to *not* live merely for today, like the Jews in Isaiah’s time, shrugging at the prospect of future judgment. Paul is saying that he for one *would* live like that if he had no hope of eternity. Our belief in future salvation has profound effect upon our lives today.

22:22 Applied by Jesus to Himself in Rev. 3:7. Eliakim could perhaps have been the Messiah figure of his time, but it seems he failed to live up to the potential, and so the prophecy was rescheduled and reapplied to Jesus. God sets up so many potentials for individuals and for His people as a whole; it’s so tragic for Him and for us all that so much potential is unfulfilled.

23:9 *To stain the pride of all glory*- All the various prophecies of judgment could have chosen many sinful aspects of the peoples’ behaviour as the reason for them. But repeatedly, pride is the sin which God focuses upon. God is so sensitive to human pride that He even notices it amongst those not in relationship with Him, and takes the trouble to punish it and bring it down. It is quite simply *so* important to be humble. God gave Judah all this information about the impending fall of the surrounding nations so that His people would perceive the principles He works according to, and therefore humble themselves lest the same inevitable judgment for pride come upon them. We are intended to reflect upon the people who form the environment God has surrounded us with, and to learn from their rises and falls.

23:15 God’s prophesied 70 year silencing of Tyre was perhaps to encourage Judah to believe that the prophecies of their 70 year captivity in Babylon and subsequent revival would likewise be fulfilled (Jer. 25:12; 29:10). God may make situations occur in the unbelieving world around us which parallel our own, in order that we may be encouraged that His word will come true in our lives and that His principles will be upheld in the end.

24:1 The earth, moon and sun (:23) are clearly spoken of figuratively, to describe the system of things in Judah- see on 1:2. However, often in this chapter we must remember that the Hebrew *eretz* translated “earth” can mean both the earth as in the whole planet, and also “the land”, as specifically the land of Israel or the land promised to Abraham.

*Empty… waste* is an allusion to how the earth was originally empty and waste in Gen. 1:2 (the same Hebrew words are used). The implication is that God was going to make a new creation with Judah out of the emptiness which His judgments would create. Again we see that God even has a creative purpose in the destruction of the wicked and judgment of our sins- hence to make something empty and waste is in fact to *create* something. Yet even this intended new creation of Judah after the 70 years captivity didn’t work out; the concept has been reapplied to how by baptism in Christ, we become a new creation once we have allowed God to make empty and waste our old personality (2 Cor. 5:17).

24:4 *The world languishes... the proud people of the earth languish*- We could probably understand “the world” here and often in the prophets as referring to people, i.e. society, rather than any reference to the physical planet.

24:16 Isaiah’s sorrow to the extent of wanting to pine away is purposefully juxtaposed alongside the reference to the fact that there would be a righteous remnant out of all the destruction. This is to show how pained he was at the fact that so many would be lost. We noted his extreme compassion for those who left or never knew God’s ways in the note on 16:9.

25:6 A reference to the marriage supper of the Lord Jesus being held in Jerusalem, on the temple mount, at His return (Rev. 19:9).

25:8 *He has swallowed up death forever*- Quoted in 1 Cor. 15:54 about how death will be no more after Christ has returned, we have been resurrected and immortalized.

The Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces- Quoted in Rev. 7:17; 21:4 as being done by God at Christ’s return when the righteous are given eternal life.

25:9 These will be our feelings after Christ has returned, and we stand immortalized before His judgment seat. Our faith in God’s final, visible intervention on this earth and in our own lives will have finally come to realization.

26:1 *In that day*- See notes on 25:6,8,9. This day is the day of Christ’s return and the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth.

26:10 This seems to be saying that it would be pointless to allow wicked people into God’s Kingdom because even there they would not wish to be righteous. If we wish above all things to be eternally righteous, then the Kingdom of God will be for us.

26:14 The Gentile nations not in saving covenant relationship with God will not be resurrected. Human beings have no inherent ‘immortal soul’; immortality is revealed only to God’s people (2 Tim. 1:10). Those who don’t know the Gospel will not be resurrected to judgment, nor will they be punished after death; they return to dust as the animals (Ps. 49:20). Knowledge is the basis of responsibility to God (Lk. 12:47,48).

26:20,21 These verses are speaking of the situation around the time of the resurrection at Christ’s return (:19). It seems God’s people will be somehow hidden from the effects of the final judgments which will come upon the earth, in the same way as the Israelites in Egypt were untouched by the plagues which came on the rest of their surrounding world.

27:3 The vineyard owner in this simile is almost obsessive- he waters it continually, and day and night watches its borders. This unusual level care of God for the vineyard of His people (5:7) is so that the vineyard has no excuse for not bringing forth fruit. God has done all that He can so that we should bring forth fruit (5:4). We cannot therefore excuse our lack of fruitfulness by saying that if we had a better or different situation, we would then be fruitful. God has given us exactly the required environment in order to be fruitful, and the level of His care should never be doubted.

27:9 *This is all the fruit of taking away his sin*- God isn’t saying that if Israel destroyed their altars, then He would forgive them. Instead His way of grace is to take away sin and then hope that we will make response to that, in this case, by destroying the altars.

28:1 Here we see again God’s persistent hatred of pride; He condemned drunkenness because it made people proud (see too :3).

28:13 *Therefore the word of Yahweh will be to them precept after precept... line on line*- This is declared as a judgment upon Judah, with the result that it would make them fall. Israel throughout their Biblical history always claimed to be believers in Yahweh and to be obedient to His word; their sin was in that they additionally did other things and worshipped other gods which were quite contrary to God’s word. The problem was in their attitude to the word of God, which they claimed to study and be aware of. They saw it as merely a series of disjointed, unrelated commands; they didn’t perceive the overall spirit behind it. Our Bible reading can be the same, indeed it is often like this for unbelievers who start reading the Bible for the first time. This is why we must pray for God to guide and assist our Bible reading so that we make the connections and join the dots, until we hear the voice of God Himself speaking to us through those lines and precepts.

28:15 *Because you have said*- it’s unlikely these people actually openly said these words. But this was how they thought in their hearts, and God reads our quiet thoughts as if we have spoken them out loud. To be spiritually minded is the essence of Christian living.

28:16 Quoted in 1 Pet. 2:6-8 about Jesus, who is either a stone to be stumbled over (8:14), or to be built upon as the foundation of our lives. Those who encounter Christ cannot be passive to Him or unaffected by that encounter; knowledge brings responsibility.

28:24-28 Although the trial and judgments God brings into our lives may appear pointlessly repetitious, they aren’t. They are for a limited time and to a specific end.

29:3 *I will encamp against you... and will lay siege against you*- It was understood that each city had its god, who was supposed to protect it from invaders. But here the God of Israel says that He Himself will camp with Jerusalem’s enemies, and enable and support their campaign against His own people. This was more radical a concept of God at that time than we can likely realize. Yet it’s all very hard for us to understand that the God of all grace can allow and bring about the most awful suffering in the lives of His children- with the aim of developing us even through our weaknesses so that we shall enter His Kingdom.

29:10 *Yahweh has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep*- Quoted in Rom. 11:8 about what God has done to all Israel, in closing their eyes to perceiving Jesus as their Messiah- in response to the fact that they had already closed their eyes to Him. There were many similarities between the Jews of Isaiah’s time and those of Christ’s (see on :13).

29:13 These words are quoted in Mt. 15:7,8 and interpreted by Jesus as a specific prophecy of the hypocrites who confronted Him in the first century. But the context of Isaiah 29 clearly requires that they had relevance to the Jews of Isaiah’s day. In this we see the uniquely living, constantly relevant nature of God’s word. It can speak to different generations in different contexts with perfect and Divinely designed relevance. This is the result of the Bible being written by the inspiration process of God’s Spirit; it isn’t, therefore, like the black print and white paper of any human book.

30:1 This must have been very hard for Isaiah to tell Judah, because for three years he had walked barefoot amongst his people to try to persuade them how Egypt would go into captivity, and Judah should hope only in God (20:1-4). Our tendency too is to treat God as a kind of extra insurance policy; to turn firstly to human strength, and only to Him if all else fails. His desire is that we should trust totally in Him, and however we might use ‘Egypt’, it should never be our strength and trust.

30:6 *They carry their rich gifts*- This is a picture of the people of Judah braving wild animals in the desert (Dt. 8:15) as they carried their wealth down into Egypt, reversing their exodus, in order to buy Egyptian support against Assyria. People will go to huge efforts and expense to obtain human strength; when the answer is ultimately in God and not man.

30:9 *Lying children*- Yet when He brought them out of Egypt, God had been certain that “Surely they are My people, children that will *not* lie: so He was their saviour” (63:8). The God who can know the end from the beginning was so in love with His people, as He is with us, that He felt the very best about them. Hence the bitter disappointment when those positive hopes were dashed by their fickleness. God has great hopes for each of us.

30:18 *Yahweh will wait, that He may be gracious to you*- There’s similar reasoning in 2 Pet. 3:14,15; the reason why the return of Christ is delayed is so that God may be gracious to even more people than He had otherwise planned. God’s delay is often because He is seeking a way to be yet more gracious. Hence “Blessed are all those who wait for Him”.

30:26 This could be a poetic way of saying that the meaning of time [as defined by sun and moon] will be changed around the time of Christ’s return. This would enable the various predicted events to happen with no problem of chronology.

30:33 This language of fire and sulphur [“brimstone”] is clearly figurative and not literal- it speaks of the anger of God in destroying His enemies. This verse clearly describes the death of the Assyrian invaders, as fulfilled in 37:36. There was no literal place of sulphur with an angry God stirring it up with His breath. Likewise the Lord Jesus used the language of Gehenna in a figurative manner- constant fire, brimstone etc. are symbols of total destruction, and shouldn’t be forced into a literal reading.

31:3 The implication is that God also has horses and chariots- His invisible Angelic cherubim. Although Judah preferred to believe in the visible horses of Egypt, yet in His amazing grace, God still used His Angelic cherubim to destroy the Assyrians (37:36). This is grace itself.

31:4 *Yahweh of Armies*- God uses this title of Himself in this context to remind Judah that He has armies of Angels at His disposal. Judah were running to Egypt to enlist the help of their human armies; and by doing so were disbelieving that Yahweh really is the Yahweh of Armies of Angels.

31:7 This means that at the time of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in Hezekiah’s time (which is the context of the chapter), the people were still worshipping idols. Yet Hezekiah had supposedly purged Judah of idols. This just shows that true faith is sometimes only found in a minority of God’s people; they may go along with the guidance of faithful leadership externally, but even good leaders cannot reform the hearts of individuals. It also shows how the Angelic deliverance of Jerusalem was due to the prayers and faith of a very small remnant, centred around Isaiah and Hezekiah.

32:6 Attitudes to the poor amongst Israel were interpreted by God as blasphemy against Him. In our age, all those baptized into the Name manifest God, and our attitude to them is our attitude to God, and will be the basis of our judgment at the last day (Mt. 25:40).

32:10 It seems Isaiah was making this prophecy a year before it would be fulfilled. His request for the women to wear sackcloth (:12) was a call for them repent- so that the promised judgments might be averted. We note God’s granting of full significance and spiritual meaning to women, making an appeal specifically to them- at a time when religion in the surrounding world considered women largely irrelevant in religious decisions, and would never have considered that the repentance of a group of women could have changed the destiny of an entire nation, far beyond whatever their male leaders might decide.

32:14 The threatened judgments against “the city” (also in :19) presumably refers to Jerusalem. It seems that on one hand, it was God’s intention to allow the Assyrians to destroy Jerusalem as well as Judah, and yet He saved it for the sake of the faithful minority who were there, based around Isaiah and Hezekiah. God is so sensitive to His people that He is willing to change His stated purpose if He hears powerful prayer and genuine spirituality amongst even a minority.

33:11 *Your breath is a fire that will devour you*- This is a common theme, that the rejected are those who condemn and destroy themselves, often by their own words (“breath”).

33:15 *Shuts his eyes from looking at evil*- Very relevant to us in the age when all manner of evil can be viewed without others knowing. This verse teaches that our hands, eyes and ears really can come under our control. There is the impression given that human behaviour is somehow automatic; and yet we clearly can take control of our senses and responses to them.

33:18 This refers to the Assyrian military personnel outside Jerusalem, wisely analyzing the situation as they besieged the city. But Paul alludes to the LXX of this verse in 1 Cor. 1:20, where he says that we too are surrounded by the wise and powerful of this world, but ‘Where are they...?’ compared to the power of the Gospel of Christ, which declares their wisdom and human strength as nothing. Paul therefore understands each of us as being as it were in essence in the same position as the Jews of Isaiah’s time, tempted to rely upon Egypt rather than God, and likely to be awed by the human strength of those things which are against us. And yet we are to see them in the perspective of faith as nothing, as foolish and weak.

33:24 There is a connection between sin and sickness, as made also by Jesus (Mt. 9:5). It doesn’t mean that sickness always comes as a result of sin, but rather that because of our fallen state as a result of sin we are generally prone to sickness and death. The ultimate answer to sickness, therefore, is the complete removal of our sin, being counted righteous by God, and therefore being related (by His grace) to eternal life. In our age this is possible through baptism into Christ.

34:8 In human terms, this seems rather unjust. God had called the nations to attack and destroy Judah because of her sins, and yet now He takes vengeance for Zion (as in 35:4) as if she has been unfairly treated, and those nations require punishment for what they did. The final algorithm of God’s justice is far beyond our total comprehension, but perhaps we are to perceive in this the passionate love God has for His sinful people- in that He so loved them that even when they were justly punished, He punished those by whom they were punished with great fury. This was in a sense just because they were also sinners. But whoever touches God’s people, even when they are in rebellion against Him, has touched Him at a highly sensitive spot. In these things we see the depth of God’s love for us, and how He counts us as His very own, and feels to us that way, even when we are in rebellion against Him.

34:10 *Smoke will go up forever; from generation to generation, it will lie waste*- Eternal fire and smoke is again used figuratively, as a symbol of total, permanent destruction. It can’t be literal, for the ‘eternal’ smoke is paralleled with laying calm and desolate for ever. We need to remember this in considering Christ’s use of the image of ‘eternal fire’ as a symbol for complete destruction, rather than forcing his words into any literal interpretation.

35:4 *Vengeance... retribution*- see on 34:8.

35:10 Whatever possible application this may have had to Hezekiah’s time (e.g. the return of those who had fled Zion in fear) and what might have been after the destruction of the Assyrian invaders, or at the return of the exiles from Babylon, it is clearly a prophecy of God’s future Kingdom on earth when Christ returns. Our joy will be “everlasting”, whereas all joy in this life is tinged by the sense that it shall come to an end, the emotion has to subside, with the prospect of death ever before us. The joy we will then have shall have no fading away from a crescendo back into normality, but will have this ‘eternal’ aspect to it.

36:1 The Assyrian invasion was in the 14th year of Hezekiah’s reign. He reigned twenty nine years (2 Kings 14:2). His sickness unto death from which he was miraculously healed gave him another 15 years to live (38:5); his serious illness was therefore in the same year in which Judah was invaded. So often, several things go seriously wrong in our lives all at the same time. The chance of that happening is negligible; clearly such negative coincidences are all under God’s controlling hand [not that of any cosmic ‘Satan’ being]. The coincidences would be too great to write off as merely chance. Note also that Hezekiah had lived a good life and acted in faith despite being surrounded by many of weak or weaker faith- and then, double tragedy struck him. Good living is no guarantee of a charmed life now, indeed, given all the Biblical examples of good people like Hezekiah suffering bad things, we should be surprised if we don’t receive them.

36:10 The way Rabshakeh uses the term “Yahweh”, speaks Hebrew (:11) and is aware of Isaiah’s prophecies about Assyria being sent to punish Judah, and the fact that Judah had trusted on Egypt when Yahweh had told them not to (:6), would all suggest that Rabshakeh was an apostate Jew who had gone over to the Assyrian side.

36:16,17 This is a parody of Micah’s prophecy of what God’s future Kingdom on earth would be like (Mic. 4:4). The allusion is so strong that it would seem Rabshakeh knew that prophecy, confirming the suggestion made under :10 that he was an apostate Jew. The kingdoms of this world offer us a fake kingdom of God in this life- if we submit to them and reject the vision of *God’s* Kingdom. Going the way of the world may appear to give all that God’s Kingdom offers- but the kingdoms of men shall come to an end, all is not what it seems, they will not last eternally as God’s Kingdom will; and it is for us to have the wisdom to see that we face a choice between the Kingdom of God, and the kingdoms of men which are a poor imitation of it.

37:1 In times of crisis, our response should be the same- to turn to God, to His house (the ecclesia), to His word and to His faithful people, asking them to pray for us. Maybe there are times when we can literally place a letter or hospital report on a table and pray to God over it, bringing it as it were in a special sense before Him (:14).

37:7 *A spirit*- Can refer to an attitude of mind. God is quite capable of giving people mindsets, over and above their own thinking. There are many situations in life where we realize that we simply cannot change another’s mind. But God can.

37:16 *Yahweh of Armies*- Hezekiah uses that title for God in recognition of the fact that God has armies of invisible Angels far mightier than the armies of the Assyrians which surrounded him.

*You have made heaven and earth*- The Psalms record many other prayers where believers in extremity have been inspired in their faith by the fact that God is creator. As He has created all things that are, it follows that to change one small thing within that creation on the face of one of the smallest planets of the cosmos... is in fact nothing at all difficult for Him. Such inspiration to faith is not present for those who believe the myth that all things evolved without God’s creative input.

37:20 *That all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are Yahweh*- A common reason given by faithful believers when begging God to hear their prayer. It should be most important to us to see His glory worked out through the answer to our requests, rather than merely personal benefit to us. This approach will also influence what we pray for, as well as how we pray for it.

37:22 *The virgin daughter of Zion has despised you and ridiculed you*- This “daughter” refers to the faithful remnant in Jerusalem. But God speaks of them as being far more confident and full of faith than they really were; they feared the Assyrians and didn’t exactly laugh at them. But we see here one of many examples of how God is so thrilled with the faith of His children that He counts what faith and spirituality they have as far more than it actually is, so thrilled by it is He.

37:23 *Against whom have you exalted your voice?*- Rabshakeh spoke with an exalted, loud voice to all the Jews guarding Jerusalem (36:13). But God says that effectively, he had been shouting against the most holy God. God in all His holiness was manifest in those spiritually weak members of His people who were then in Jerusalem. His identity with His people is simply amazing; and it doesn’t end when they become weak or are in double mind about Him, just as it doesn’t in a natural family.

38:1 *In those days*- His sickness was at the same time as the invasion. See on 36:1.

38:3 Hezekiah simply puts his situation before God, he doesn’t actually specifically ask for healing. But God saw the essence of his heart, and read this as a prayer requesting healing and the extension of life. At times, typically during illness, we find it hard to verbalize prayer; and yet God sees to the core of our hearts, and understands what are really our heart’s desires, and understands these as requests to Him.

38:5 *I have heard your prayer, I have seen*- Hezekiah had just been begging God to *hear* and *see* the behaviour of the Assyrians (37:17). God teaches us how to pray through some desperate experience, and then gives us another crisis in which we can as it were practice the style and intensity of prayer which we learnt in the previous experience.

38:19 Hezekiah didn’t want to die because he understood that after death he couldn’t praise God. His understanding of death was as a state of total unconsciousness, where he would meet with neither God nor man (:11). There was no ‘immortal soul’ or conscious survival of death in his theology, these were pagan ideas of the time which he clearly rejected- as should we. The devotional point is that life is for praising God; and given the brevity of it, every minute must be harnessed into His praise, rather than frittered away.

39:8 The Hezekiah story has a spiritually sad ending, with Hezekiah appearing selfishly content that he himself won’t suffer too much for his prideful friendship with the world and indeed, with those who were God’s especial enemies. We inevitably wonder whether in spiritual terms it wouldn’t have been better for him to die when God first offered him the chance to, as it were. We need to consider relatively ‘premature’ deaths in this light; maybe they are a case of ‘die young stay pretty’ in spiritual terms. For it is far better to die in youth and rise again to live eternally, than live a ‘long’ human life to in middle or older age turn away from faith and the hope of the Kingdom.

40:3 Quoted about John the Baptist preaching the Gospel of Christ (Mt. 3:3). Before the final coming of the Lord, there will be a proclamation of this by His people: “Prepare you [plural] the way”. As the King’s servants went ahead of him to make the path he had to travel smooth and plain [remember there were no motorways then!], so we go ahead of the returning Lord of all the earth, to prepare the way / road for Him. The fulfilment of this commission by John the Baptist in the first century is therefore a great pattern for our fulfilment of it before the Lord's second coming in our age. And yet God prepares His own way (43:19; 49:11). The element of unreality here, the ‘new thing’, is that the King Himself prepares His own way or road. The connection with Is. 40:3 is that in the work of preparing the Lord’s way, in the last great preaching appeal of all time in the lead up to the second coming, the Lord Himself will work with us to make that way plain and clear. We are to “cry” unto Zion that “her iniquity is pardoned” (:2), but we are also to ‘cry’ for her to repent, to be “made straight” (:2-4; 58:1). It’s exactly because we have in prospect been forgiven that we are called to repent. The forgiveness has already been granted; iniquity has been pardoned. We are to ‘cry’ out this fact; and also to ‘cry out’ for repentance. But we have to respond to that. The world’s redemption was achieved through the cross; but we have to appeal to the world to accept it. The same Hebrew word translated ‘cry’ occurs in the same context in 40:26; 43:1; 45:3,4; 48:12; 54:6, where we read that it is God Himself who calls every one of Israel back to Him, just as He calls every star by its own personal name. And so in our personal calling of men and women, in our crying out to them in these last days to be prepared for the Lord’s coming, we are workers together with God. He is crying out to them, through our feeble, shy, embarrassed, uncertain words of witness. Likewise it is God Himself who makes the crooked places straight in 42:16 and 45:2- whereas Is. 40:3, it is we the preachers who are to do this. 40:4 In the prospect of Christ’s coming and our meeting with Him, those with a too low self esteem are lifted up, and the proud brought down to their level; so that between them, the prepared people of God are the road over which God’s glory in Christ shall advance. “Made low” uses the same word as in Is. 2:11, which predicts that in the day of judgment, the proud looks of man shall be humbled [s.w. ‘made low’]”.

40:8 *The word of our God*- Interpreted in 1 Pet. 1:24,25 as the Gospel of Christ.

40:10 Applied by Christ to His second coming in Rev. 22:12. The reward is brought to us from Heaven to earth at His return; we don’t go to Heaven after death to receive it. Statements about God are fulfilled in Christ, as His Son who has been given by God all authority to act in His Name; but this doesn’t make Jesus God Himself in person.

40:15 *The nations are like a drop in a bucket*- This was said in the context of Judah being tempted to trust in the nations around them rather than in God. Reflection on the extent of His power as seen in the natural creation (:12-14) is intended to inspire faith in practice.

40:17 *Regarded by Him as less than nothing*- This is not to say that God considers human beings as irrelevant; the significance of the human person is ever before us in the Bible. The context of these statements about the smallness of man is the appeal not to trust in human strength but in God, compared to whose strength humanity is nothing.

40:22 *The circle of the earth*- Although people at the time generally believed the earth was flat, God’s word doesn’t contradict true scientific fact, even though at times He speaks to people in the unscientific language which they can cope with.

40:27 *The justice due me*- The pain of injustice afflicts people in so many ways; but the answer given here is to look to the future day of God’s Kingdom, whilst meanwhile remembering God’s amazing knowledge and sensitivity to the nuances of every human situation, better than we ourselves know them. His present knowledge and future revelation of judgment is the answer presented to our search for justice today.

41:8 The servant of Isaiah’s prophecies is “the seed of Abraham”, but Gal. 3:16 interprets this seed as a singular person, the Lord Jesus. The “servant” is therefore both Israel and Jesus. He is their (our) representative, the One to whom every one of God’s people should aspire. Wherein Israel failed to fulfil these servant prophecies, the Lord Jesus did. We can now become God’s “servant” people, Israel of the Spirit, by baptism into Christ- so that all that is true of Him becomes true of us.

41:22 *Declare the former things*- Not only is God’s prediction of future events a sign of His supremacy as God, but we must consider too that He is the only ultimate historian; He alone can attach meaning to the events of history, interpreting in a way so unique that we are persuaded that surely, He alone is God. This is why so much of the Bible is in one sense history, and God’s interpretation of it. This of itself ought to persuade us of Him and His word, quite apart from His predictions of future things.

41:25 *He shall come on rulers as on mortar, and as the potter treads clay*- This connects with the prophecy of Dan. 2:44, that Christ’s second coming will be like a stone hitting the feet of clay of human kingdoms.

42:3 Quoted about the preaching of Jesus in Mt. 12:18-20. He didn’t turn away from human weakness, but rather tried to fan what spiritual fire there was into a greater flame; we should have the same attitude to people. Isaiah prophesied in the context of the Assyrian invasion, at which time Judah were tempted to trust in the “broken reed” of Egypt (2 Kings 18:21). This is the only other time the phrase is used. God was even unwilling to break Egypt, but rather sought even their salvation (Is. 19:24).

42:4 *He will not fail nor be discouraged*- This is a prophecy of Jesus. He had so much to discourage Him, and yet it seems He never felt totally discouraged even once- because He looked at the short term ups and downs of His ministry from a Kingdom perspective, knowing that *ultimately* all would work out. We need to look at the down cycles of our own experience the same way.

42:14 God likens Himself here to a woman; characteristics of both male and female are found in Him, in whose image both male and female were created (Gen. 1:27; 5:1,2).

42:16- see on 40:3.

42:22 *No one says, ‘Restore them!’*- Nobody at that time was saying that, but God had prophesied so many times that His people would be restored at the end of 70 years, and Cyrus did indeed make the amazing call to restore Judah then (see Ezra 1). The challenge at Isaiah’s time was to view the discouragement of the moment in the context of God’s prophetic word- to suffer the apparent silence of God “bearing in mind the time to come” (:23) when one *would* say “Restore them!”.

43:4 That God should ‘honour’ His weak people is amazing. But this is what it means to be loved by God; for the object of love is thereby respected and honoured in the eyes of the lover. And this is how God also sees us today.

43:7 *Each one*- Every single Jew in captivity was created potentially for God’s glory. At the end of the 70 years captivity He did indeed command the Persian empire to allow the Jews to return; but the majority chose to stay where they were rather than return to the ruined, hard land of Judah- to glorify God. The frequent emphasis on how “each one” would be gathered shows the colossal significance of the individual human person to God, and how He sees us as individuals rather than merely His people *en masse*.

43:15 *The Creator of Israel- your King* - Because Yahweh God was Israel’s creator, therefore He ought to have been their King. If we really believe His creative authority over us, then He will rule in every aspect of our lives; this is an implication of our belief that God created us and we didn’t create ourselves by fluke chance.

43:17 *They shall not rise*- Another proof that those who don’t know God will die and remain dead. Hence the urgent importance of spreading the knowledge of God to those who have not yet heard.

43:24 *You have wearied Me with your iniquities*- God speaks here of being burdened by Israel's sins- and yet this is a prelude to the passages which speak of the Lord Jesus bearing our sins on the cross (53:4,11,12). He was wearied by Israel's sins even though God does not "grow weary" (40:28) by nature; in His full entering into His people's situation, in His extreme sensitivity to our behavior, He does allow Himself to grow weary with the sins of those with whom He is in covenant relationship. It was this kind of capacity which God has which was supremely revealed in His 'sharing in' the crucifixion of His Son.

44:14-18 The folly of sin is only fully evident to God. We may go along with the text here, poking fun at the idiocy of idolatry- and yet we all have a tendency to this kind of thing, because every sin is in essence a form of idolatry.

44:22 God appeals for Israel to respond by pointing out that in prospect, He has already forgiven them. This not only inspires our personal repentance, but can be the basis upon which we appeal to others to repent- that for the sake of Christ, God has forgiven them, but they need to claim that and identify with it. Isaiah urged the Jews to return to the land by saying that God had forgiven them, and on this basis He appealed for them to both ‘repent’ and ‘return’ to the land. The two terms are related. Thus He showed His grace; forgiveness preceded, not followed, repentance. As Paul put it, the goodness of God leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). And we are asked to show that same “goodness” of God to others, being “kind [s.w. ‘goodness’] one to another… forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). We too are to show this grace of forgiveness-before-repentance; but perhaps in no other area has formalized, institutionalized Christianity failed worse. The Greek word translated “goodness” is rendered “gracious” in 1 Pet. 2:3- newly converted babes in Christ taste of this gracious goodness, and it leads to repentance.

44:26 *Who confirms the word of His servant, and performs the counsel of His messengers*- The singular servant is equated with His “messengers”, whose “counsel” to others is the word which is Jesus, the true servant. If we are “in Christ” then we are His witnesses, and He is especially with us in our witness for Him.

44:28 The command of Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to Judah and rebuild their temple at his expense as recorded in Ezra 1 was clearly a result of God working on the hearts of unbelievers to make them do things which otherwise have little sense or human wisdom. The tragedy is that most of the Jews preferred the soft life in Babylon and didn’t return.

45:5-7 Of especially significant influence upon Judaism were the Persian views of Zoroastrianism. This was a philosophy which began in Persia about 600 B.C., and was growing in popularity when Judah went to Babylon / Persia in captivity. This philosophy taught that there was a good god of light (Mazda) and an evil god of darkness (Ahriman). Is. 45:5–7 is a clear warning to the Jews in captivity not to buy into this – Israel’s God alone made the light and the darkness, the good and the calamity or “evil”. The Jews were influenced by the Zoroastrian idea that somehow God Himself would never cause evil in our lives – and therefore, God is to be seen as somehow distanced from all good or evil actions, as these are under the control of the good and evil gods. The fact is, God personally is passionately involved with this world and with our lives; and so it is He who brings about the dark and the light, good and evil. “In pre-exilic Hebrew religion, Yahweh made all that was in heaven and earth, both of good and of evil. The Devil did not exist”. During their captivity in Babylon, the Jews shifted towards understanding that there was actually a separate entity responsible for disaster. Hence Isaiah 45:5–8 warns them not to adopt the views of Babylon in this area, but to remain firm in their faith that God, their God, the God of Israel, the one and only Yahweh, was the ultimate source of all things, both positive and negative, having no equal or competitor in Heaven. This becomes a frequent theme of Isaiah and other prophets who wrote in the context of Israel in captivity. The Jews of course were monotheists, and these ideas were developed in order to allow them to believe in both one God, and yet also the dualistic, god of evil / god of good idea of the Persians. It was in this period that the Jews fell in love with the idea of sinful Angels, even though the Old Testament knows nothing of them. They didn’t want to compromise their monotheism by saying there was more than one God; and so they set up the ‘evil god’ as in fact a very powerful, sinful Angel. And this wrong notion was picked up by early Christians equally eager to accommodate the surrounding pagan ideas about evil.

45:18 This verse is proof enough that God won’t allow the world to be destroyed- He has a glorious purpose with it.

45:20-24 These words are quoted in Phil. 2:9-11 in description of the believer’s response to the suffering Saviour. And yet they are quoted again in Rom. 14:10-12 regarding our confession of sin before the Lord at judgment day. The connections mean simply this: before the Lord’s cross, we bow our knee and confess our failures, knowing the imputation of His righteousness, in anticipation of how we will bow before Him and give our miserable account at the judgment. And both processes are wonderfully natural. We must simply allow the power of a true faith in His cross to work out its own way in us. At the judgment, no flesh will glory in himself, but only in the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1:29). And even now, we glory in His cross (Gal. 6:14).

46:3,4 God is likening Himself to a woman who carries a child in her womb, then bears it, and then carries it as a baby, but still carries it when the child is an old man. The God of all knowledge is aware of a fundamental psychological phenomena in all men; the fear, however passive and buried, of being without their mother; the fear of loneliness, the fear of eternal separation from the woman who bore and carried them. From the president to the happy village grandfather, this sense is there. Perhaps David appreciated this when he referred to a man weeping at his mother's funeral (not his father's) as the ultimate cameo of grieving and desolation of soul (Ps. 35:14). And yet God says that He is in some ways the eternal mother, the one who bore and carried us in babyhood, but the One who will yet carry us when we are gray headed and once again unable to walk. Yet He is also the everlasting Father to us, through His Son (9:6). It's a picture of exquisite beauty. Our relationship with God as the One who will never leave us is the only answer to what philosophers call 'the existential problem'; the awareness that has come to every thoughtful soul, the terror of being so alone as we get older, the dread of being without our human roots, of becoming the one to whom others (e.g. our children) look to as their background and root, whilst we ourselves have no tangible link with our past. This horror of existential loneliness can only be met by our sure knowledge that we have a very personal relationship in the Kingdom of God with our Heavenly Father, who will never ever leave us, and will preserve us unto His eternal Kingdom.

47:8 *I am and there is none else-* We bear the Name of Yahweh / Jehovah, by reason of our baptism into it. His Name is declared as His character- merciful, truthful, judging sin, patient etc (Ex. 34:5-7). He who will be who He will be, manifesting His characteristics as He does so, must have His way in us too. Babylon and Nineveh were condemned for having the attitude that “I am, and there is none beside me” (Zeph. 2:15). Their self-perception was a parody on the Name and being of Yahweh: He alone can say “I am, and there is none else” (43:11; 44:6; 45:6,21) and seek to be who He is. He alone can seek to articulate the characteristics that make up His Name onto the lives of others, and onto the things that comprise His Kingdom. We are not to be who we are in a fleshly sense; to ‘just be yourself’; to ‘just do it’, as foolish slogans and adverts encourage us. We are here to show forth His mercy, truth, judgment of sin, patient saving of the weak etc., not our own human agenda. We are, in the very end, Yahweh manifested to this world, through our participation in His Name in Christ.

48:3 *Suddenly I did them, and they happened*- Another of Isaiah’s allusions to creation. All that happens in our lives is a creation from God’s word of command; even the bad things in our experience have ultimately a creative, positive intent from God.

48:6 *And you, will you not declare it?-* God is the One who ‘declared’ things in advance (:5), and we in our turn are to declare to the world what He has declared. In our work of witness there is a mutuality between God and us.

48:18 The fact God knows all possible futures must make His experience with us His people so tragic. For sorrow is largely related to our awareness of what could have been; and God knows that so much could have been. The promises to Abraham and the coming of the Messianic seed of Abraham could have been fulfilled; but because Israel chose to be wicked, there was no such peace to them (:22). For all their wealth in Babylon, they had no peace with God.

48:20 *Flee from the Chaldeans*- Judah were comfortable and prosperous in Babylon, as the conclusion to the book of Esther shows. Jews were senior in commerce and politics (as witness the book of Daniel). Yet they were to “flee” from this situation because of its huge spiritual danger. Generally they didn’t perceive the spiritual danger of the world in which they lived, and most Jews remained in Babylon, to their spiritual destruction.

49:2 The Lord Jesus is described as having a sharp sword going out of His mouth (Rev. 1:16; 2:16; 19:15); this is a prophecy of Him personally.

49:8 2 Cor. 6:2 interprets this time of salvation and acceptance as “now”. The window of opportunity which there was for Judah to return from exile and inherit the restored Kingdom of God is “now” in that we should likewise be appealing to men and women to quit this world of “Babylon” and journey towards God’s Kingdom. The spiritual opportunities which there are “now” are amazing; but there is an urgency to our appeal in that the time of acceptance is “now” and the amazing opportunity must be grasped “now”.

49:10 Quoted about how we shall be led by Jesus in the future Kingdom of God on earth (Rev. 7:16,17).

49:16 Judah in captivity must’ve thought that God had forgotten them and His land as it lay there desolated. We too at times feel the apparent silence of God means that He is somehow there but too far away. But He assures them and us that His silence is only apparent. They were engraven upon His palms, perhaps alluding to the fact that it seems that to this day the Lord Jesus has on His hands the marks from the nails with which He was crucified (Zech. 13:6; Jn. 20:25-27; Rev. 1:7).

49:24 Despite having enabled their exit from Babylon, they complained: “Vindication remains far removed from us and deliverance does not reach us” (59:9). This was an awful spurning of the great salvation enabled for them. They remonstrated against God’s message of deliverance from captivity: “Can prey be taken from a warrior? Or can prisoners of a tyrant be rescued?” (:24). They thought their salvation was too hard even for God. They made the same mistake as all who reason that their situation or personality is too far gone for God to redeem. For the ‘salvation’ of the exiles in Babylon is alluded to in the New Testament as a prototype of our salvation in Christ. The good news of *potential* deliverance from Babylon is quoted as the good news of salvation from sin (Is. 52:7-10 = Mk. 1:15; Mt. 10:7,8; Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15; Is. 61:1,2 = Lk. 4:16-21).

50:1 God was angry with their sins, but kept no record of them- hence He could comfort Judah that there was actually no documentary evidence for their divorce and therefore she could return to Him.

50:6,7 *I gave… I didn’t hide my face… set my face like a flint*- The body language of Jesus as He endured His sufferings is worth trying to imagine. His spirit of self-sacrifice and willing suffering with and for us would’ve shone through it. Lk. 9:51,53 notes how He set His face to go to Jerusalem and die there, His determination and conscious self-dedication were visible in how His face was set. We are asked to carry His cross with the same devotion.

51:8 God’s salvation is paralleled with His righteousness; He saves people by counting them as if they are righteous on account of their relationship with Him. In our times our baptism into Christ means that His righteousness is counted to us, and on this basis we shall be saved.

51:14 This sounds as if they were all willing and eager to leave that spiritually dreadful place. But the reality was that Judah didn’t hasten to be loosed, they preferred the Babylon life, and didn’t perceive it for the spiritual pit that was killing them which it was. Most of them chose to remain there. So this passage is therefore a prophecy, a command, about how God *wanted* Judah to respond.

51:17 God 'stirred up' the spirit of Cyrus and also of the Jews who returned (Ezra 1:1,5). Isaiah uses the same Hebrew term to describe how Israel's saviour would be "raised up"- 41:2,25; 45:13. Isaiah pleads with Zion, i.e. the faithful, to indeed be stirred up- 51:17; 52:1 appeal to Zion to "Awake!"- the same word translated "stirred up". But Isaiah tragically concluded that there were so few who would 'stir up themselves' (64:7). God had given them the potential to be 'stirred up' in their hearts and minds to leave Babylon and return- but they wouldn't respond. And today, the same happens. God is willing to change hearts, to stir up materialistic and complacent spirits- but because we're not robots, we have to respond.

51:22 To be given a cup of wine to drink from the Lord is a double symbol; of condemnation, as it is here; or of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16). When we take the cup of the Lord at the breaking of bread service, we are drinking either to our eternal blessing or condemnation- hence the need for self-examination, so that we drink to our blessing and not our condemnation (1 Cor. 11:29).

52:2 The Jews didn’t perceive the soft life of Babylon as chains around their necks, and so they didn’t loose themselves and leave.

52:7 *The feet of him*- A prophecy of Christ’s preaching of the Gospel. But it is quoted in Rom. 10:15 with a significant change of pronoun- “the feet of *them*”. We who are baptized into Christ are His witnesses; His preaching is ours and vice versa. We will experience His especial identity with us in our efforts to preach the Gospel.

52:7-10- see on 49:24.

52:13 From here to the end of chapter 53 we have the ‘Servant song’ which speaks most clearly of the death and work of Christ for us. Many phrases in it are applied to Jesus in the New Testament (Mt. 8:17; 20:28; Mk. 15:28; Jn. 1:29; 12:38; Rom. 4:25; 10:16; 1 Cor. 15:3; Phil. 2:4-8; Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 2:22,24).

52:14 There was something especially awful about the physical appearance of Christ on the cross, a reflection of the huge mental struggle there was within His holy mind as He finally overcame sin in all its forms.

53:1 *Who has believed our message?* was fulfilled both in the final, friendless rejection of the crucifixion, and also in the failure of Israel to really believe as a result of the Lord’s miracles done during His life (Jn. 12:38). “He has borne our sickness, and carried our suffering” is how :4 described the cross; but these words are quoted in Mt. 8:16,17 about the Lord’s healing of people. The miracles therefore were performed in the spirit of the cross- personally identifying with the sick and healing them through that identification. His whole life was a being acquainted with disease (Heb. “grief”) (:3); and yet we read in this same context that He was put to grief in His death (:10). The grief of His death was an extension of the grief of His life. “He bore the sin of many" (:12) is applied by Jn. 1:29 to how during His ministry, Jesus bore the sin of the world. All this shows that the cross wasn’t an unusual, one time act of supreme devotion; the spirit of it was lived out in the Lord’s daily life. We who are to carry His cross must see it the same way.

53:2 *As a root out of dry ground*- There was nothing around Jesus in His environment which encouraged spirituality. He grew as we do, as a tender green plant in a desert.

53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray*- We tend to sin as a result of group mentality; and yet this influences us individually to each turn to our own personal, unique way of sinning.

53:7 *As a sheep that before its shearers is mute*- A sheep is dumb in this situation from total fear. Jesus was human and in His time of dying went through all the usual human emotions in the face of death.

53:9 A detailed prophecy of how Jesus died with the wicked but was buried in the tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathea.

53:10 *He shall see his seed*- Did Jesus have a vision of us the ones He would redeem, which inspired Him at the end, at the very time He was making an offering for sin?

54:4 *Your widowhood*- The implication is that God as their husband (:5) had died- and somehow returned to life to remarry them. This doesn’t mean that Jesus is God, for God by nature cannot die; rather does it speak of the intensity to which God was manifest in Christ and went through the pain of death as it were because of what Israel’s unfaithfulness and rejection felt like to Him.

54:6 In this language God as it were takes false guilt over His divorce with Israel; such is His gushing love for His unfaithful people who now return to Him.

54:7 God clearly has emotions of a kind which are not unrelated to the emotions we experience, as beings made in His image. But those emotions involve a time factor in order to be emotions. We read of the anger of God "for a moment" (:7,8; Ps. 30:5), and of His wrath coming and going, leaving Him "calm" and no longer angry (Ez. 16:42). When we sin, we provoke God to anger- i.e. at a point in time, God sees our sin, and becomes angry. This is attested many times in Scripture. But it's meaningless if God is somehow outside of our time and emotions.

54:17 *Their righteousness which is of Me*- Again we meet the New Testament idea of imputed righteousness, for Isaiah makes clear enough elsewhere that Israel had no righteousness of their own. We too have God’s righteousness imputed to us by being in Christ.

55:1 Whilst we don’t have to actually pay money for God’s blessings, we are expected to go through the feelings of having paid, given something, in response to what He has already given us so as to take them to ourselves.

55:3 *The sure mercies of David* result in the wicked man forsaking his way (:3,7). The description of the promises to David as “sure mercies” (1 Chron. 17:13) may perhaps be with a reference to his sin with Bathsheba; his forgiveness in that incident is typical of that which we all receive (Rom. 4:6-8). The very existence of the “mercies of / to David” therefore inspire us in forsaking sinful thoughts and wicked ways (:7).

55:11 The parallel between the seed and the convert is such as to suggest that the word of God will produce converts in some sense; it will not return void (:11). The apparent dearth of response to some preaching therefore poses a challenging question. Are we preaching the word of God alone, or our own ideas? Does God withhold blessing for some reason unknown to us? Or is this only part of a wider picture, in which somehow the word *does* return void due to man’s rejection? Thus the word of God was ‘made void’ by the Pharisees (Mk. 7:13 RV- a conscious allusion to Is. 55:11?). One possible explanation is that “the word” which is sent forth and prospers, achieving all God’s intention, is in fact Messiah. The same word is used about the ‘prospering’ of the Servant in His work: 48:15; 53:10 cp. Ps. 45:4. Another is to accept the LXX reading of this passage: “…until whatsoever I have willed shall have been accomplished”. Here at least is the implication that *something* happens and is achieved when we preach God’s word. The same idiom occurs in Ez. 9:11 Heb., where we read that “the man clothed with linen”- representing Ezekiel or his representative Angel- “returned the word, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me”. The word ‘returned’ in the sense that someone, somewhere, was obedient to it even if others weren’t.

56:7 *My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples*- Quoted by Jesus in Mt 21:13 as a demand for God’s house *now* to not be a forum for personal financial gain. If we are living the Kingdom life now, then whatever is said of the future Kingdom must in essence be the rule of our lives today.

56:11 *Each turned to their own way*- This phrase connects clearly with 53:6, which says that although we have *each* done this, Christ’s death was for us, to save us from that situation. The group in view in 56:11 were obsessed with money and personal pleasure, whilst claiming faith in God. Those types may seem the hardest to convert; but we are each in essence the same, and the connection with 53:6 shows that the cross is powerful enough to shake even them, even us, from such complacency.

57:11 One thing that works against truthfulness is the neuroses that come from fear, the fearful tensions that arise between our real self and the false self. Fear and truth are opposed. This isn’t merely psychobabble. Consider God’s words about this in Is. 57:11: “Of whom have you been afraid and in fear, that you lie, and have not remembered Me?”. The life of brave faith, the life that is lived in the overcoming of fears, the fearless breaking out of our comfort zones… this is the true life, the life in which we have no need to lie nor believe in lies. But of course it’s hard, because we think that the truth, the reality, is what we see around us; whereas faith is believing in what is not seen. Yet actually what is not seen is the reality, and what is seen is very often a lie. And the true life is a life of faith in those things which are not yet visibly seen.

57:14 *Stumbling block*- The ultimate rock of stumbling for the Jewish people is accepting Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ (Rom. 9:32,33; 1 Pet. 2:8). The preparation of the highway for Christ’s return involves Israel accepting Jesus as Christ. This is why we should preach to Israel in the last days, for the sooner they accept Christ, the quicker He will return.

57:15 *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a broken and humble spirit*- This purposeful juxtaposition brings out the great paradox- that the God who is so high above humanity dwells together with the very lowest and most broken of humanity. Humility and broken spiritedness are of the highest value to God. The “high and holy place” of God’s dwelling contrasts with the “high and lofty mountain” where the humanly wise of Israel offered sacrifice to idols (:7). The ultimately humble man was the Lord Jesus. God doesn’t live in physical houses built by people, but in the humble heart of a man; and supremely, within the person of Christ. If we are in Him, God dwells in us.

57:19 *Peace, to him who is far off and to him who is near* - Eph. 2:13,14 alludes here, interpreting the “peace” as peace with God, offered to both Jews (“him who is near”) and the Gentiles “far off”. Acts 2:39 also has this passage in mind, when Peter offers the Spirit gift of salvation to those who are “far off”.

58:2 Again we see that Judah weren’t atheists, nor did they formally reject Yahweh- rather the opposite. But they ignored His commandments in practice, and those they kept they used as a means for spiritual pride. In all this we have a highly relevant message to ourselves.

58:3 *In the day of your fast you find pleasure*- Sacrifice to God must be sacrifice, contrite repentance means just that, rather than using these concepts as a channel for our own self-fulfilment.

58:5 *Bow down his head as a rush*- To quickly spring back again to pride. Our talk of humility mustn’t be just a temporary, tokenistic acceptance of it as a nice idea.

58:6 Consider how Jesus brings together various passages from Isaiah in His opening declaration in Lk. 4:18: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the good tidings to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,   and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach [proclaim] [Heb. ‘call out to a man’] the acceptable year of the Lord”. This combines allusions to Is. 61:1 (Lev. 25:10); Is. 58:6 LXX and  Is. 61:2. Is. 58 has many Day of Atonement allusions- the year of Jubilee began on this feast. We are as the High Priest declaring the reality of forgiveness to the crowd. Hence Lk. 24:47 asks us to proclaim a Jubilee of atonement. The Greek for “preach” in Lk. 24:47 and for “preach / proclaim the acceptable year” in Lk. 4:19 are the same, and the word is used in the LXX for proclaiming the Jubilee. And the LXX word used for ‘jubilee’ means remission, release, forgiveness, and it is the word used to describe our preaching / proclaiming forgiveness in Lk. 24:47. It could be that we are to see the cross as the day of atonement, and from then on the Jubilee should be proclaimed in the lives of those who accept it. It’s as if we are running round telling people that their mortgages have been cancelled, hire purchase payments written off... and yet we are treated as telling them something unreal, when it is in fact so real and pertinent to them.

58:6-13 This seems to be a reference to an insincerely kept day of atonement in Ezra or Nehemiah’s time. The Jewish nobles were oppressing the poor and thereby keeping the feast with no meaning. If they had properly kept the feast, then the promised Kingdom conditions would have burst forth to the world around them. But they were too caught up with their own self-benefit to be bothered to show true care for their brethren. If they had, then the glory of Yahweh would have entered the temple, just as Ezekiel 43 had prophesied would happen, if the Kingdom was rebuilt as commanded.

59:1,2 If we feel that God is somehow limited, we must ask whether it is in fact our sins which are limiting His action; because He Himself is totally unlimited in His possibilities.

59:7,8 These verses are quoted in Rom. 3:17 about all of us. We aren’t to look at Judah at this time and shake our heads in disgust at them; the essence of their failures is to be found in each one of us.

59:9- see on 49:24.

59:13 *Conceiving and uttering from the heart*- Sin is conceived within the human heart, not placed there by some cosmic Satan being (Mk. 7:15-23; James 1:13-15). Our own heart is the arena of our spiritual battles; we are responsible for our sins, because they begin within our own minds.

59:20 The Redeemer is interpreted as Christ in Rom. 11:26. We could understand this verse as meaning that Christ shall come to Zion when there are in her those who have turned away from their transgression- which in the context of Israel is their rejection of Jesus as Christ. This would suggest a repentance of some Jews is required before Christ’s return; and this should motivate our preaching to them.

59:21 *My Spirit... My words*- There is a common parallel of God’s words and His Spirit (notably in Jn. 6:63). The Bible is written by inspiration of God, and is therefore the work and vehicle of His Spirit. One way in which the Spirit works in our lives today is therefore through God’s word the Bible.

60:5 Note how the sea is used as a symbol for the nations- this is common in the Bible.

60:6 *They shall bring gold and frankincense*- What was potentially possible for Judah at the time of the restoration, or perhaps at the time of Hezekiah, didn’t come true because of their disobedience. But this doesn’t mean the prophecy was falsified- it was reapplied to Jesus, the true “servant of the Lord”, and this was fulfilled when the wise men brought Him these presents at His birth. God will not be defeated by human failure, but somehow His word comes true.

60:11 The reality was that the walls were built from a motive not of glorifying Zion in fulfilment of prophecy, but for defence against the Gentiles.  But the gates had to be shut to keep the Gentiles out (Neh. 13:19), lest they yet further corrupted the Jews who were eager to trade with them on the Sabbath rather than convert them to the God of Israel. Instead of bringing their goods through the gates to lay before Yahweh, they brought in their goods to sell to His people in trade. But returned Judah didn’t act as a nation of priests, the food the Gentiles brought in to Zion was to be sold for profit to the Jews. They failed to be a missionary nation, and rather were mere trading / economic partners on an equal footing [cp. the church today?].

60:13 But Haggai lamented that instead, Judah dwelt in their own beautifully ceilinged houses”, they used the exotic trees of the land for their own homes, whilst the house of Yahweh lay desolate. The prophecy of :14 started to come true after Haman’s demise; but Judah didn’t do their part in fulfilling the rest of that prophecy, which speaks of a rebuilt Zion. Note that the language of wood from Lebanon being used to build the temple is alluding to what happened when the first temple was planned and built under David and Solomon. The future Kingdom of God on earth will be a restoration of the Kingdom of God as it historically was on earth previously (Acts 1:6; see on Ez. 21:25-27).

61:1,2- see on 49:24; 58:6. This prophecy was fulfilled in the preaching of Jesus (Lk. 4:17-21). It could have come true at the return of the exiles from Babylon, when they could have rebuilt Jerusalem to Kingdom specifications (:4). But they became obsessed with building their own houses and trying to build up their own kingdom rather than God’s, and so the prophecy was rescheduled and given a more spiritual fulfilment in the preaching of Jesus to people like us who are held captive by sin and human weakness.

61:6 Again we see God’s intention that all Israel should have graduated to become priests (Ex. 19:5,6); this became true in the new Israel, the ecclesia, where we are all to have the spirit of priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).

61:8 Entry into covenant relationship with God requires first of all that we recognize our sinfulness, as was the case with Israel.

62:1 Although God may appear inactive, there is a restlessness in Him, willing all things towards their appointed end- the establishment of His Kingdom on earth based around Jerusalem. This restlessness of God is inspired by His people continually begging Him to intervene on earth, to reveal Himself and establish His Kingdom (:6,7).

62:6 *I have set watchmen on your walls*- These watchmen refer to we who pray continually to God to establish His Kingdom (:7), but God has as it were set us up to pray like this. There are times when we feel we have been moved by God to pray about things; in this phenomenon we perceive God’s grace, that it’s not all simply up to us, but God to some extent works in our spirituality and inspires us to pray as we should, as if He wants as it were an excuse to act.

62:11 Applied by Jesus to His second coming in Rev. 22:12.

63:3 Here and in :5 we have a window into the loneliness of Jesus on the cross, where His clothing was made red with His own blood.

63:8 Israel did deal falsely with God, but His hope- a blind hope which was born of the extent of His love for them- was that they would not deal falsely with Him. This positive hopefulness of God for His people should be seen in us too.

63:10 *His holy Spirit*- God makes His Angels spirits (Ps. 104:4; Heb. 1:7), and the reference here and in :11 is to the Angel who went with Israel on their wilderness journey as the special manifestation of Yahweh, the “Angel of His presence” (:9). The New Testament promises of “the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit” are full of allusion to this part of Isaiah 63. The Comforter would teach (Jn. 14:26), guide (Jn. 16:13), be a judge (16:8) and prophesy (16:13); the Angel guided Israel through the wilderness, taught them God's ways, judged Egypt and the Canaanites, gave prophecies, and represented God to Israel as the Comforter represented Jesus to His people.  As the church  began a new Exodus and was constituted God's Kingdom in prospect as Israel were at Sinai, it was fitting that it should also have an Angel leading them, representing God to them. As Israel were led by a special Angel through the wilderness, whom Isaiah 63 associates with God's Holy Spirit, so the new Israel were led by a Holy Spirit Angel, the Comforter, who was sent to the church by Jesus after His assuming of all power over the Angels on His ascension. The Jewish fathers resisted the Angel of the presence which went with them; and so the Jews of the first century did just the same (Acts 7:51). The Holy Spirit is the power of God, not a person, but it is sometimes personified; one reason for that may be that it worked in the first century through this Comforter Angel of the Lord’s presence.

63:16 *Israel does not acknowledge us*- We have here the heart cry of the righteous remnant, rejected by the majority of God’s people and feeling God too is somehow distant from them. This has been a common experience amongst the righteous over history.

64:4 This is quoted in 1 Cor. 2:9; the things prepared for those who wait for God are the things of redemption and forgiveness in Christ. But Paul interprets “him who waits for Him” as “them that love Him”. To love God is in one sense to wait in patient faith for Him to act and send His Son to establish His Kingdom. But the waiting game is harder than it seems, because we expect immediate response from God, whereas the intention of His apparent inaction is to focus us instead upon the return of Christ and the coming of His Kingdom as the ultimate resolution of all things. Is. 64:4 says that only God alone knows these things He has prepared for us in Christ. But Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:10 that they are also known by us, through God's Spirit. So through our association with the one Spirit, the one Name of Yahweh, what is true of God Himself on a personal level becomes true of us. Such is the wonder of the way in which His fullness dwells in us.

64:7- see on 51:17. The destruction of the wicked is “by means of [their] iniquities”; sin is its own judgment.

65:1 God's experience with the Jews in exile was tragic. He set them up with the possibility to return to Judah, to establish there a Messianic-style Kingdom, giving them the commands in Ez. 40-47 for a glorious temple; but most of them preferred the soft life in Babylon, and those who did return proved small minded, selfish and disinterested in the vision of God's glory. In this context, Isaiah ends his restoration prophecies on a tragic note from God: "I was ready to be sought... I was ready to be found" by the unspiritual exiles in Babylon. But Israel would not. He pictures Himself standing there crying "Here am I, here am I!"- to be rejected by a people more interested in climbing the endless economic and social ladder in Babylon and Persia, and caught up in finding petty religious fault with their brethren (:5).

65:17 *New heavens and a new earth*- The close of Isaiah’s prophecy is related to how it opens in 1:2; and there, the heavens and earth are figurative for the system of things which was in Judah (see note there). This verse is quoted in 2 Pet. 3:13 as having had a fulfilment in the destruction of the Jewish system in AD70; yet then the literal Heaven and earth weren’t destroyed.

65:24 *Before they call, I will answer*- This is found in the context of a prophecy about the future Kingdom of God on earth. But Jesus applies this phrase to our experience in prayer now, when He says that God knows our needs before we ask Him in prayer (Mt. 6:8). Answered prayer is a foretaste of the Kingdom life. The essence of how we will eternally live in the Kingdom can be experienced in our spiritual life today. In this sense Jesus said that we “have eternal life”, in the sense that we can begin to live now the type of life we will eternally live.

66:2 The Jews did tremble at the word at the beginning of the rebuilding (Ezra 10:9). But it was a momentary thing; they came to see the building of the walls as more important than keeping a trembling spirit. Works eclipsed spirituality. Yet Isaiah had taught that the trembling at the word was more essentially important than building temples. But Judah paid no attention in the long term. Perhaps God was saying that His plan for the glorious rebuilding of the temple at the time of the return from exile in Babylon wasn’t going to work out, and instead He was going to focus on dwelling with humble, broken individuals who loved His word.

66:3,4 God does not just disregard those who turn away from Him. He deceives them, and leads them into a downward spiral of moral and doctrinal declension. The idea of "the God of Truth" deceiving people may seem strange at first. But consider how He chose Israel's delusions by making their idols answer them; see too 1 Kings 22:20-22; Ez. 3:20; 14:9; 2 Thess. 2:9-11.

66:16 *Plead judgement*- The Hebrew word translated “judgment” here is also translated “plead”. God’s judgments aren’t the anger of an irritated deity, rather are they constructive, designed to plead with those who observe them to repent.

66:19 Paul’s desire to go to Spain (Rom. 15:24) indicates a commitment to taking the Gospel to the very ends of the world he then knew. He may well have been motivated in this by wishing to fulfill in spirit this Kingdom prophecy of :18,19, which describes how Tarshish (which he would have understood as Spain) and other places which “have not heard My fame, neither have seen My glory” will be witnessed to by those who have seen His glory and have “escaped” from God’s just condemnation by grace. Paul sees this as referring to himself. For he speaks in Rom. 15:19 of his ambition to take the Gospel to Spain; and in that same context, of how he will bring the Gentile brethren’s offering up to Jerusalem. This is precisely the context of Is. 66- the offerings of the Gentiles are to be brought up to Jerusalem, as a result of how the Lord’s glory will be spoken of to all nations. So Paul read Isaiah 66 and did something about his Old Testament Bible study; he dedicated his life to taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, and he encouraged them to send their offerings to Jerusalem. He was no mere theologian. His study and exposition of Old Testament Scripture led to a life lived out in practice, to hardship, risk of life, persecution, loneliness, even rejection by his brethren. It is also significant that :19 speaks of nations which occur in the list of nations we have in Genesis 10, in the context of the effect of Babel. It is as if Paul sees the spreading of the Gospel as an undoing of the curse of Babel and the establishment of the Kingdom conditions described in Is. 66. By his preaching of God’s Kingdom and the reign of Christ, he brought about a foretaste of the future Kingdom in the lives of his converts. And we can do likewise.