

# Isaiah (Part 3) - Asset or Liability?

by Ron Bailey

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*God is an asset, not a liability, and His people are His unique nation, with a unique and exclusive relationship like a marriage covenant.*

**Duration:** 1:16:18

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 31:24-26, Isaiah 40:31 - 41:2, Isaiah 43:18-20, Isaiah 43:27

**Topics:** "Isaiah"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Isaiah, specifically chapter 43. The speaker begins by referencing Deuteronomy and Isaiah 43:27, where God accuses the people of Israel. The main theme of the sermon is the purpose of the people of Israel, which is to show forth God's praise and display his character through their lives. The speaker emphasizes the importance of waiting upon the Lord and having a servant-like attitude. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God is unique and there is none like him, and that we should remember his heavenly perspective in all things.

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## Transcript

Okay, let's just have a word of prayer then, and we'll begin. Beyond the sacred page we seek thee, Lord. We lift our hearts to you.

Thank you again, Lord, that you've sent one to lead us into all truth. Not just to express it in our minds, but to take us right into it, so that it becomes our truth. We give ourselves to you, Lord, this day, and depend again upon your help.

Glorify our Lord Jesus as we share these things together. Amen. Would you like to turn again to Isaiah? We really are still very much at the beginning of things, and what I want to do, whether I shall ever get to where I really want to go, I'm beginning to wonder.

I think we finished yesterday morning on the last verse of chapter 40, just pointing out that this waiting upon the Lord is really the disposition of a servant. It's an attitude of heart. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

They shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. I'm sure you've heard lots of people speak about that verse, so I'm not going to concentrate on it. But just to move on into chapter 41, where it says, keep silence before me, O islands, and let the people

renew their strength.

Let them come near, then let them speak. Let us come near together to judgment. And then the prophet does another one of these prophetic leaps, and he jumps some more years, and in his prophetic vision, he sees a man referred to here as, the A.V. says, a righteous man.

It's really a man that God has called in his own righteousness, who raised up, I'll leave it as it is in the A.V., who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, and gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings. He's still asking the question, who are we talking about? The one he's talking about is God, Jehovah, the one who has expressed himself in that relationship to the people of Israel. The name Jehovah is the great name by which God revealed himself to the people of Israel.

All God's names are revelations of his character. They're not labels like our names are. I sometimes say this, if you've heard me say it before, please excuse me for saying it again, but my particular label tells you nothing at all about me.

My label was given to me because during the war years, my mother went to the cinema and saw a film in which there was a good-looking American cowboy, who later on became a president of a certain country, and decided this would be a good label to stick on this thing that she was carrying, and that is the explanation of my label. It tells you nothing at all about my character, except the kind of family that I come from. But God's names aren't like that.

God's names are not arbitrary labels, they are revelations of his character. In fact, if you want to do something when you read the scriptures that may just open little avenues of truth to you, whenever you see the word name in the scriptures, when it speaks of the name of God, or the name of the Lord Jesus, in your mind, just briefly, substitute the word character. Just briefly, substitute the word character, and it will begin to open all kinds of things out to you.

God revealed his character in a unique way to the people of Israel in this name of Jehovah. He was theirs, and they were his. It was a special kind of union.

When Ezekiel spoke of the time that that union took place, he expressed it like this. Ezekiel chapter 16, when God said, I swore an oath to you, and you became mine. I entered into a covenant with you.

The people of Israel, the nation of Israel, became God's unique nation, and there came into existence a unique and exclusive relationship, which is like marriage. And from this time on, whenever the people of Israel rebelled against God and went after other gods, God referred to it as adultery, because it was a breaking of this marriage covenant into which he had entered with them at Sinai. God here is beginning to speak about the time.

Let me give you that timeline again, just so that we can work to it. Isaiah was prophesying, at this time, probably, round about the time shortly after the northern kingdom of Israel had been taken into captivity in Assyria. Remember, that was 722 BC, if you remember that date that we spoke of.

In the earlier part of the next century, in the 590s, 580s, the kings of Babylon would come to Jerusalem and break down Jerusalem's walls and take captive the people of the southern kingdom, Judah. And they would be in captivity for 70 years. Now, the prophet is looking beyond that time, and is beginning to look to the time when God would raise up another kingdom.

So, you've got three empires now that have touched this prophet in his prophecy. You've got Assyria, followed by Babylonia, followed by this next empire that's now coming up. This man that God raised up from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him.

Someone has told me they're kind of putting down some of the quotes that I'm quoting. Here's a quote for you, if I can remember it. The tapestry of history has no place at which it can be cut and the story makes sense.

Do you understand that? That really is very kind of poetic. It simply means that, of course, history, you can't deal with it in blocks, because what happened yesterday inevitably affects today, and that happens and affects the next day, and it's like that. But there are one or two points in history where you can almost do it, when there is such a marked change of direction that you can almost start a block of history at this particular point.

And the raising up of a man named Cyrus, who came against the Babylonian empire and conquered it, and quickly brought a whole area under his rule, is a point a little bit like that. You can almost start a new section of history with Cyrus. He came almost from nowhere, without any warning.

He was a man particularly, uniquely commissioned of God. If you want an explanation to the meteoric rise of Cyrus, you've got it here. God raised up this man from the east, and called him to his foot, and gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings.

God gave to this man amazing power and authority. And although the nations trembled when they saw the power of Cyrus, as far as God is concerned, Cyrus is just another servant that he has called to his foot. This is like, um, what do they call this? This is a like a royal commission.

This is a command performance. God calls Cyrus to his feet, and he says, come here, Cyrus, I've got a job for you. God gave this man his name in prophecy over a hundred years before the man existed.

Although this man never knew God in the way that God's people knew him, God knew him, and God had a purpose for him. And he begins to speak of Cyrus, and Cyrus becomes, in a sense, my servant. He is God's man that God chose for a particular purpose.

And it says a little bit here of the conquests of Cyrus. Remember, we are talking a long time before it happened, 150 years. I'll read verse 2 again.

Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, made him rule over kings. He gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow. He pursued them and passed safely, even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.

Who has wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning, I, Jehovah, the first and with the last. I am he. The isles saw it and feared.

The ends of the earth were afraid, drew near and came. They helped everyone his neighbor, and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith.

And he that smooths with the hammer, him that smote with the anvil, saying, It's ready for the soldering. And he fastened it with nails that it should not be moved. What's all that about? It's referring to the fact that this shadow of Cyrus, as it began to spread over the nations, the nations trembled at the approach of this

man.

It didn't seem as though it was possible to stop him. One empire after another tumbled to this man's advance. The isles trembled.

Everyone is afraid. And people try to encourage one another, and one man encourages another. And how can they best encourage one another? Well, their only hope is in their gods.

So, you're back to the idol makers. You're back to the carpenter saying to the one who smooths out the gold, who smooths with the hammer. The carpenter encourages the goldsmith, and he that smooths with the hammer, him that smote with the anvil.

It's their only hope. And then in verse 8 it says, But thou, Israel, art my servant. Israel was not the servant of a god that had been made by a carpenter or a goldsmith.

In fact, a little bit later on in Isaiah, perhaps we can just turn to it briefly. In chapter 46, there is one of the times that Isaiah makes a very strong contrast between one kind of god and another kind of god. And maybe it's as well that we consider these things at time and ask ourselves a question.

What kind of god do you have? Is your god a liability or an asset? What kind of god do you have? In this little passage of scripture, you're going to read about two different kinds of gods. The first two that are referred to in chapter 46, Bel and Nebo, are names of two Babylonian gods. And this is how Isaiah, speaking about a spirit of God, expresses things.

Bel bows down. Nebo stoops. Their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle.

Your carriages were heavy loaded. They are a burden to the weary beast. Let me ask you, is your god a burden to the weary beast? Is he a liability? Does he have to be carried about? Is he just another responsibility? Because that's what was going to happen here.

They stoop. They bow down together. They could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly. The question that's really being asked in chapter 46 is a very simple one. It's who carries who? That's the question.

Who carries who? Or should it be whom? I'm never quite sure what to do with who's and whom's. Who's doing the carrying? Are you doing the carrying? Is that the kind of god that you've got that is a liability, that is just another burden, just another responsibility? Is he like the gods of the ancient people, who was hopeless and helpless to help himself? Those gods had eyes, but they did not see. They had ears, but they couldn't hear.

They had hands, but they couldn't help. And one of the ways that the people of Israel distinguish between those gods and their god is that they referred to their god as the living god. The living god.

Not one of these idols, not one of these liabilities that has to be carried about. Hearken to me, verse 3, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb, and even to your old age I am he. And even to whose hairs will I carry you.

I have made and I will bear. This is a key truth in the scripture, that you are responsible for what you make. What you make, you are responsible.

If you are the creator, you become responsible for the thing that you have created. If you create yourself a god, you will find yourself responsible for the god that you have created. You'll find you're having to carry him.

If you have some notion of god, some idea of your own, inevitably you will end up carrying the burden of that responsibility, of the god that you have created. The very last verse of John's first letter says very simply, little children, keep yourselves from idols. Keep yourselves from do-it-yourself gods.

Keep yourself from your own ideas. The things that you end up having to be responsible for, and you have to defend them, and you have to hold up the testimony of this god that you have invented, they're a burden, these gods. They're a liability.

The poor weary beasts you can see, Isaiah, with this irony that so often comes in his prophecies. These poor creatures, puffing and panting, pulling these gods about that are absolutely helpless to help themselves. But I have made, he says in the second half of verse four, and I will bear.

Even I will carry and will deliver you. To whom will you liken me and make me equal and compare me that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag and weigh silver in the balance and hire a goldsmith and he makes it a god. They fall down.

Yea, they worship him. They bear him upon the shoulder. They carry him and set him in his place and he stands.

From his place shall he not remove. Yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. Remember this, and show yourselves men, bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.

Remember the former things of old, for I am God and there is none else. I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, this is Cyrus again, calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executes my counsel from a far country.

Yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it, I will also do it. This is God again, just drawing attention to himself.

There's an absolute contrast between God and all other gods. All other gods are the creations of men, and because they are the creations of men, they become the responsibilities of men, and they have to carry them, and they have to look after them, and they have to polish them and dust them when they get dusty, and if they fall on their faces like Dagon, they have to lift them up again. These poor gods, utterly helpless, they have to be towed here and there.

So, it's as well to know that we're rightly related to the God who has created us, because if he has created us, then we are his responsibility, and he will do the carrying. And then God is an asset and not a liability. Let's go back to where we were in chapter 1, 41.

Verse 8, it is God contrasting the people of Israel with all those other fearful nations who trembled when the shadow of Cyrus was going to draw near. Verse 8, but thou, Israel, art my servant Jacob, whom I have

chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. It's a wonderful phrase, isn't it? We become so familiar with these phrases, I think, sometimes that we must need to leave them on one side and then come back to them and see them fresh.

Abraham my friend. This is the God of the whole earth. This is the God, remember, who measures the heavens in a span, who measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, for whom all the nations are just like the drop of a bucket.

And he looks down upon this man, Abraham, and he says, this man is my friend. Staggering, isn't it? The Lord Jesus said something similar. He said, you are my friends, if you do those things that I command you.

And that's the secret of Abraham's friendship with God, that Abraham did those things that God spoke to him. By faith he obeyed, going out, not knowing where he was going, by faith, by faith, trusting God. He speaks here about Israel as God's servant.

Notice, please, the singular. Israel, my servant. We're going to look at something in a moment.

Israel, my servant. Jacob, whom I have chosen. The seed of Abraham, my friend.

Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, thou art my servant. I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. Fear thou not, for I am with thee.

Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee. Yea, I will help thee.

Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. I want to try and draw your attention to something that is almost impossible to see in any Bible translation which comes from the 20th century. Now, this isn't because I'm archaic that I'm saying this.

It's just simply because we have lost something in the 20th century in the English language. Those of you whose first language isn't English, you won't have this kind of problem that people whose first language is English do have. And that's the fact that we've lost this word, thou.

Thou is the second person singular. It means you, personally. It's like a finger that comes out and says, I don't mean everybody generally, I mean you particularly, thou.

What's happened is that it's got merged into this other one, the second person plural, which is you. And now, with any translation that you have that has been produced in the 20th century, you no longer see the distinction between thou and you. And there are times when it is a vital distinction.

Let's go back to Exodus, to the time when the people of Israel were you. Let's go back to Exodus chapter 19. Verse 4, we can pick up with these eagle's wings.

This was to be the eagle-winged nation, Israel. You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagle's wings, and brought you, plural, unto myself. Now therefore, if you, plural, will obey my voice indeed, and keep my commandment, then you, plural, shall become a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.

For all the earth is mine, and you, plural, shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. What happened with the people of Israel, as a result of their experience in God, is that this whole nation of people, all these individuals, were all baptized into one person. They were baptized into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea.

And from that time, they took on a corporate entity. They took on a responsibility in the sense of one person, and God often referred to them as one person. If we go, make a big jump from Exodus to Deuteronomy, and come towards the end of Deuteronomy, in chapter 31.

This is after their time in the wilderness, and the people of Israel, God's people joined to him now in covenant, have come to the threshold of their inheritance. They're about to enter into that that God has promised to them. And God speaks to Moses, and gives Moses a song.

And Moses is to teach this song to the people of Israel. They all have to learn it. I often wonder what it must have been like, teaching them all this song.

It's not a very pleasant song. It's a song that has a very powerful warning in it. This is God, right at the beginning of his dealings with his people.

And you get this same note of pathos, of sadness, that you heard that we read together in Isaiah. When in Isaiah, God said, I knew that you would deal very treacherously. And here, in the book of Deuteronomy, in chapter 31, this is Moses speaking.

I'll read from verse 24. Chapter 31, verse 24. And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, take this book of the law, and put it in the inside, in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

For I know thy rebellion. Notice, we've gone into the singular now. I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck.

Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, and then we come back to plurals, you have been rebellious against the Lord, how much more after my death. Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death, ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you.

I know. This is Moses speaking by the Spirit of God. I know.

Just as Isaiah laid to us to speak by the Spirit of God, I knew. I knew you would deal very treacherously. Here's Moses, I know.

Verse 29, I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days, because you will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. And Moses spoke in the ears of the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended. You know parts of this song.

Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak, and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My teaching shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender grass, and as the showers upon the grass, because I will publish the name of Jehovah, the character of Jehovah. It was the

intention that this nation should publish the character of Jehovah.

This was God's purpose with this missionary nation, with this priestly nation. They were to publish the name of the Lord. They were to reveal the character of God.

They were to be a people who would show forth the virtues of their God. Behold, I will publish the name of the Lord. Ascribe greatness unto our God.

He is the rock. His work is perfect. For all his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and upright.

That's the character that they were to portray. That's the character that, by their lives, this people received a commission to live out, so that other nations would look upon them and say, what kind of God does this people have that they live in this way? And the result of that would be that they would come and inquire and know more about the God who is publishing his name, revealing his character in his people. The rock.

His work is perfect. Does this sound like a description of Israel to you? His work is perfect. All his ways are judgment, truth without iniquity, just and right.

It doesn't sound like a description of Israel as we came to know it. I knew, says God, that you would deal very treacherously. On one occasion, it's in Isaiah, if I can just find it quickly.

I just thought I might be able to see a verse, but I can't just drop my eye on it. But there's a time in the prophecy of Isaiah where God speaks to his people and he says to them, your first father has sinned. Do you know where that is? Your first father has sinned and your interpreters, he says, have sinned against you.

I can't just see it. Yes, I can. Chapter 43.

If you've got any fingers left, you can leave one in Deuteronomy. Isaiah 43 and verse 27. This is where God is bringing his heavy-hearted accusation against the people of Israel.

I'll read from verse 18 so that we can pick up the sense of it. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing.

Now it shall spring forth. Shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls, because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert to give drink to my people, my chosen.

This people have I formed for myself. They shall show forth my praise. That was their purpose.

That was their purpose to live a life in which God would be able to display his character in them with such a fullness that people would have seen their good works and glorified their father, which was in heaven. They were to show forth the praises of God's name. But, verse 22, thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings, neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices, but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins.

Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. That's a terrible thing for God to have to say. You have made me to serve with your sins.

God is saying, my intention was that you should live such a life that there could be an obvious association between you and your God, and so that people would say, look at the kind of God that these people must have to live the life like this. They would enhance the character of their God. They would be a credit to their God.

God says, you've certainly linked me with yourself. You've made me to serve with your sins. And elsewhere, he says, because of you my name is blasphemed among the heathen.

Goes on, verse 25, I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance. Let us plead together.

Declare thou that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore, I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

Thy first father, verse 27, hath sinned, and thy teachers, maybe in your margin you've got the word interpreters, your interpreters have transgressed against me. You know what an interpreter is. He's another middleman, isn't he? In the same way that a priest is a middleman, a priest is between two separate parties, the living link between two, so an interpreter is a link between two.

He is the living link between two different persons. Your interpreters have transgressed against me. One of the consequences of having had the Church Life School in Reading for the past few years has been that if I'm able to go to any other country, there's a little pool of interpreters who are available to you because they know you.

If you don't know anything about the Church Life School, I'll just explain that it was something we did for the past four or five years in Reading. We haven't done it this year, and we have no fixed plans to do it next year either, but the pattern was that particularly folks from overseas were invited to come and be part of the Church for six months in Reading, and then we reinforced the things that they were learning in the Church by specific times of study that we spent together, and people would come, and we'd spend lots of times together around a big old Victorian table, and we'd share, and we'd learn lots of things together. The consequence was that if I go, I remember on one occasion going to Russia, to Moscow, and there was a sister there by my side, and to preach through this interpreter, it was absolutely glorious.

You see, she knew me. She trusted me. She knew how I thought.

She knew where I was going. I forgot her most of the time. I just carried on preaching, just pausing from time to time, and it flowed.

I remember in Tanzania, I was with a brother who you know well in the church here at Exeter called John and Kenda, and I was out in the open air with a conference that they had gathered together. There were about, I think, about 1,200 Africans or something all gathered together. It was a wonderful time, and just sharing, and preaching, and absolutely oblivious to the fact that I got this man by my side, and there were two sisters who were there at the same time, and one of them said, you know, just to watch you, and to see the two of you together, she said it was like that, and she wrapped her middle finger over her first finger.

She said, you couldn't see daylight between you. That's an interpreter, but an interpreter can't do that unless he knows the person, unless he's learned to trust the person, unless he's learned to know how the person works, and then it's just one simple flowing, no struggling. Your interpreters have transgressed against you, God said.

Maybe you've heard the funny story about an interpreter. This was supposed to have happened also in Africa, in Nigeria, of a man who, he was Welsh, if there are any Welsh here, I apologize for what I'm going to say, but I worked with a Welshman for many years, and it was a joy. I do know that the more excited he got, the more Welsh he got, and the more Welsh he got, the more unintelligible he got, and this is what happened in Nigeria at this particular time, that there was a Welshman who was preaching, and as he became more and more excited, his accent became stronger and stronger.

There was an Englishman in the meeting, and afterwards he spoke to the interpreter, and commended him, and he said, really, that was amazing. He said, that man had such a strong accent, it was difficult for me to understand what he was saying, and the interpreter said, I couldn't understand a word he was saying, I preached a sermon of my own. Well, 10 out of 10 for initiative, but that is not an interpreter, that is not an interpreter.

Your interpreters have transgressed against me, God says. I've said one thing, and you've said another thing, he said. I've revealed this character to you, so that you could interpret me to the nations, and you've said something quite different to what I said.

You've spoken your own ideas, you've said your own things. Your interpreters have transgressed against you. I've gone back to Deuteronomy now, chapter 32, verse 4, he is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment.

A God of truth and without iniquity, just and upright is he. They have corrupted themselves, and he goes on to, I'll read from verse 7 now, remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations, ask thy father and he will show thee, thy elders and they will tell thee, when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. Does that mean that there were going to be enough people of the children of Israel to act as interpreters to the whole world? I don't mean they were going to be linguistic genius, I just mean, is this part of God's intention? Verse 9, for the Lord's portion is his people.

Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land and in the waste howling wilderness. He led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye, as an eagle stirs up her nest, back to eagles again, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them upon her wings.

Can you see who's doing the carrying there? He's the eagle bearing her little ones upon her wings. So, the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth.

Just a word about eagles. Of all the creatures that God has ever created, the eagle is the least earthbound. Of all the creatures that God has created, the eagle is the least earthbound.

Those who wait upon the Lord, they shall renew their strength, they shall, it doesn't say they'll flap their wings, it says they shall mount up with wings like eagles. Because eagles don't get to the prodigious heights they get to by flapping their wings. They get there by cooperating with things that scientists call

thermals.

And in hot countries where there are outcrops of rock, an eagle will find this and it will soar just on spread wings. Without any effort, it'll go higher and higher. It's the least earthbound of all the creation.

God wanted Israel to be like that. Not to be like the other nations. Not to be those who can't lift their eyes up above the level of the horizontal, who are totally preoccupied with all the things that are happening around them.

He wanted them to be up, up, up, beyond it all, seeing things that no other people could see. In the midst of the tragedy that God predicted through Isaiah, God brings a word of comfort and he says, fear not thou worm, Jacob. Amazing, he intended them to be an eagle.

But even when they got to the stage when they were just behaving like a worm, God didn't abandon them. It's amazing, isn't it? God's intention, God's plans, God's destiny for this people. My people.

You pick it up with a word that God uses. Verse 15. God uses a special title here for his people.

Jeshurun. It means my upright one. If you know the Wesley hymn, you've sung it.

None is like Jeshurun's God. But he says here, but Jeshurun, my upright one, waxed fat and kicked. Thou art wax and fat.

Thou art grown thick. Thou art covered with fatness. Then he forsook God, which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.

They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods. With abominations provoked they him to anger. If you go on into the next chapter, if again, if my eyes can just fall on it, 33 and verse 5, he's one of them, speaks of Moses and his relationship with God when he says he was king in Jeshurun when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together.

And then later on in chapter 33, getting towards the end of it, there's this part that Wesley was quoting from. Verse 26. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in thy help and in his excellency on the sky.

The eternal God is thy refuge. Please notice the singulars. The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.

And he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee and shall say destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone. The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine.

Also his heaven shall drop down due. Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord. The shield of thy help and who is the sword of thy excellency and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

I'm trying to trespassing when we get to this word treading, just in case my brother wants to say something about treading. I thought my other brother might say something about treading this morning. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

This people was intended to be a who were the head and not the tail. They were intended to be a people who were to be the overcomers, the victorious people. People who would ride upon the high places of the earth.

A people who would stand in authority and execute God's rule upon the earth. They were intended to come into a land that had been possessed. When I say that, I'm thinking of demons.

But a land which had been possessed by such an evil people that God said, I mentioned it the other morning, God said the land is vomiting them out. The people of Israel were to go into that land and exorcise it. They were to go into that land and cast out the pollutions of these other spirits, these other religions.

God said to them, if you go into the land, if you keep the laws that I give to you, he said your days will be like the days of heaven upon earth. It'll be a little bit of heaven dropped from out the skies one day. Now, that's Ireland, isn't it? Now, it would be a little bit of heaven.

It would be a unique place with a different kind of rule. All around, all the other nations would live in a different kind of way, but here, a holy people, a kingdom of priests, heaven upon earth. Can you understand, then, this supreme tragedy? I'm hopping backwards and forwards, but can you understand the supreme tragedy when this nation, at one time in its existence, actually said to God, we want to be like the other nations? Can you hear the supreme tragedy of this? We want to be like the other nations.

They had been chosen expressly to be unlike the other nations. They had been chosen to show forth the praises of his name, to be Jeshurun, my upright one. God's people upon earth, heaven upon earth.

You get little glimpses of it here and there, perpetually, when things happen. Do you remember during Solomon's time, when the man of blood was over and the man of peace was upon the throne, and they began to come from Sheba, and they begin to come, and they begin to see things that not seen before, and the queen of Sheba begins to say, oh, this really, what kind of God have you got that he has given this kind of people? That was what was intended to happen. Tragedy, tragedy.

That is not unlike unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven again and again with this people. When they sinned, God forgave them and gave them a new start. Again and again, he gave them a brand new chance.

If you read the story of the book of Judges, you'll find there's a constant pattern to it. They forget God, they sin, they turn their back upon God, they come under the domination of other nations. In their distress, they cry to God, and he sends them a savior, a judge, a deliverer, and they are delivered, and they grow fat, and they kick, and they go back under a domination of other nations, and in their desperation, they cry to God, and he sends them, and again, again, again, again, he comes back to them forgiving, restoring, and every time he comes back to them, it's that little phrase, you know, in 1 Corinthians, where our A.V. says, love thinks no evil, and literally, it's love doesn't keep a score of evil.

How about that? Not keeping a score. Coming back, and every time he comes back and gives them another opportunity, he starts from fresh and clean, and says, okay, my heart is unchanged towards you. It's God's last testament to Israel in the book of Malachi.

I have loved you. I have loved you. They sinned, they repented, he came back, he started again, again, again, again.

Some of their kings were bad kings, and they sinned, and God brought terrible things upon them, and they repented, and God gave them a good king, and they had a new start. Hezekiah, Josiah, new starts, kept on having these new starts, and each new start ground to a halt and died in the dusts of another disappointment, and God keeps on coming, keeps on coming. Then they were going to be taken away into Babylonian captivity, and even in Babylonian captivity, God would still keep his eye upon them, still have a purpose for them if they were ready.

He said it in the great prayer of Solomon, that if the people repented and turned to God, he would start again with them, and he did. Again, he brought the people back from Babylon and started again with them. Dramatic God's beginnings.

I was thinking this morning, when we were reading with Mr North, that chapter in Chronicles, 1 Chronicles chapter 21. I promise you, I didn't do this calculation that I'm going to share with you when he was preaching. I did it afterwards when everyone began to go down to coffee, and I just wanted to do some calculations.

Here's 1 Chronicles chapter 21. You know, David takes this census. Part of the purpose of David's census was that he was trying to, he was trying to assess the power of his war machine.

That's what he was doing. He was counting how many people he could put in the front line, and what happens is this, verse 5 of 1 Chronicles chapter 21, and Joab gave the sum of the number of the people to David, and all they of Israel were about a thousand thousand, that's a million, and a hundred thousand men that drew sword. You see, he's counting his soldiers, and Judah was four hundred, three score, and ten thousand men that drew sword.

But Levi and Benjamin, Joab did not count among them, for the king's word was an abomination to Joab. So, in verse 5, you've got some really hefty numbers. You've got one million, one hundred thousand people who are able to bear the sword, who represented what would later become Israel.

There were always the fault lines of a crack between Israel and Judah. David brought it all together. Initially, if you remember, it was Judah who recognized David as king, and later on all the other, all the other tribes recognized David as king as well, and then he became king over all.

But these fault lines were there. They held together while David was there. They began to separate in Solomon's time, and they broke apart in Rehoboam's time.

But in the measuring of it here, you've got it. The ten tribes who were later to become Israel, one million, one hundred thousand men who were able to draw sword. Of Judah, four hundred, three score, and ten thousand men.

But Levi and Benjamin, he did not count among them. I did some calculations. If you try to work out, it's just an estimate, but if you try to work out how many soldiers Benjamin and Levi might have been able to produce, just taking the figure of one million, one hundred thousand for ten tribes and then saying, okay, that's one hundred and ten thousand, is it, for every tribe, and saying, okay, just as a rule of thumb, we'll work out that Benjamin and Levi might have added another two hundred thousand.

These are very conservative, and add that to this four hundred thousand, you're now up to, what's that? You're now up to about 1.7 million people, I think, something like that, is that right? 1.6, 1.7 million, something like that. These are soldiers. These are the people who could go to war.

Now, let's do another bit of a calculation on it, and let's try to work out how many people there were in the whole of David's kingdom. Let's work on the modern equivalent of 2.4 in the family children, and we'll give each one of these soldiers a wife, and we'll give each one of them 2.4 children, which is very, very moderate by those standards of those days. We're approaching eight million people.

That means that if Joab had completed his census, he would have discovered, working on the... are you following me with all this? I know this is a bit technical. It isn't usually what happens at Bible weeks, I'm sure. Please bring your calculators next year.

But, it's something like about 1.6 or 1.7 million soldiers, multiply it by 2.4, you're into seven or eight million people. During David's day, there are eight million Israelites. Remember, that's a thousand BC.

In the next 500 years, remember 722 BC, ten tribes were taken into captivity, lost. About 595, somewhere around about there, Judah taken into captivity, into Babylon. Judah itself was a remnant of what had been the original 12 tribes anyway.

So, even the remnant is taken into captivity, and the remnant that's taken into captivity, seven years later, a remnant of that remnant returned. So, the people who returned in Ezra's time were a remnant of a remnant of a remnant. And in Ezekiel, sorry, in Ezra chapter 2, I think it is, in Ezra chapter 2, here's another census of the people who return in Ezra's day.

We won't go through all of it, these wonderful names. I'll give you a tip, shall I, about these names when you're reading the scriptures. It's simply this, that if you pronounce these words with confidence, no one will ever question you.

They never question me anyway, and my guess is no better than anybody else's. But this is chapter 2 and verse 64. Ezra chapter 2, the whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and sixty.

Forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty. Five hundred years before this, it had been eight million. Eight million, that's somewhere close to the population of London, I should think.

Forty-two thousand, that's probably somewhere close. How many people can they get into Wembley? Eighty thousand. All right, so it's half of Wembley Stadium.

We've gone from the population of London to half of Wembley Stadium in five hundred years. I did the calculation, you can check it. It represents less than half of one percent of the people who returned, who are regarded as the remnant, who God then calls all Israel.

Look at the end of this chapter, chapter 3, chapter 2. So, the priests and the Levites and some of the people and the singers and the porters and the Nephilim dwelt in their cities and all Israel in their cities. Less than half of one percent, God's starting again. He's starting again.

Again and again He gave these opportunities to start again. There's a heartbreak in the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, the Gospel to the Jews, when He comes to the city of Jerusalem and He sees it and He weeps over it and He says, oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those that are sent to you, how often I would and you wouldn't. How often I would and you wouldn't.

It was my promise to you, it was my provision, everything was ready, it was all ready for you. Again and again and again. That is, I know I keep using this word, but the story of Israel is a tragedy.

There's an enormous tragedy in those couple of verses in John's Gospel which says, He came to His own and His own received Him not. And yet they had intended to be the servant of the Lord. They had been intended to be a new nation, like one body incorporated, the servant of Jehovah.

Let's go back to Isaiah. Can I just say again what I said, I think, the very first morning and it's just so fresh in my mind that God has this ability of offering people everything and making full provision and not holding back at all and not not restraining anything but being prodigal in His giving, even though He knows the people that He's offering it to won't receive it. He doesn't offer, He didn't offer an inferior gospel to Judas to the one He offered to you.

All the fullness of the gospel that He offers to you, He offered to Judas. There's no difference. Of course, He knows.

He knows that some will behave treacherously. He knows that some will never say yes, but it doesn't alter His attitude towards them. And were this people of His, He gave and gave and gave and gave and was ready to give again and again and again.

Oh, Jerusalem, how often. Let's go back to Isaiah, please, because this really would all end up as tragedy if it wasn't for this. Let's go back to verse 25 of chapter 41.

We're still touching on Cyrus. Isaiah 41, verse 25, I've raised up one from the north and he shall come from the rising of the sun, shall he call upon my name. And he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treads clay.

That, coming from the potters, that's a very graphic picture for me. There's a wonderful machine that they use in the pottery industry called a plunger. Sounds good, doesn't it? And it tells you everything.

It's the machine that they use to kind of recycle clay and get it back into the right consistency so that they can work with it. Of course, in the times of Isaiah, they didn't have plungers. They had very ordinary people whose job was to just keep treading away at the clay to make sure it was the right consistency.

This is one of the greatest emperors that the world has ever known, and God says he's really just treading out the clay for me. That's all he's doing. He may think he's really wonderfully important.

What he's actually doing is he's just treading out the clay for me. I've got things I'm going to make, and I'm just using Cyrus as a kind of a to tread out the clay. He's a plunger.

I'm going to pause for a moment because this word, that we keep on getting, yay, yay, yay, triggers another thought in my mind. There were very great and precious promises that God gave to Israel that never came to their full fruition because Israel did not fulfill their part of the conditions. But it says, as Paul writes to the Corinthians, that all the promises of God are in him, that's Christ, yay, and in him, amen, to the glory of God.

How does it express it? Let me read it properly so that I don't misquote it. Second Corinthians, chapter one it is, and verse 20. For all the promises of God in him are yay, and in him, amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Can you understand what I mean if I say, all the promises of God in Israel were not yay, and amen. They were real promises. They were promises that had built into them all the power of God to fulfill them, but they didn't all become yay, and amen, because they weren't received.

Israel was not the faithful servant of Jehovah. Israel did not do all his will. Israel did not say, lo, I come to do thy will.

Israel could never say, I do always those things that please him. All the promises of God were never yay, and amen, in Israel, but all the promises of God are yay, and are amen, in him. It actually says, maybe we'll, let's go back to Isaiah now.

This is really, we're beginning to get now to where I've wanted to come to. Verse 27 of chapter 41. The first shall say to Zion, behold, behold them, and I will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings.

There's another leap of the prophet here. The Spirit of God is now looking beyond. He's looked beyond Assyria.

He's looked beyond Babylon. He's looked beyond Cyrus and the Medo-Persian empire. He's looked beyond the onset of the Roman empire.

He's looked beyond it all, and here he is. Verse 27. The first shall say to Zion, behold, behold them, and I will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings.

For I beheld, and there was no man. Do you remember that little phrase? It's not the first time that God says it. It's not the last time that God says it.

God said it through Ezekiel. There was no man. In the book of Revelation, John sees the effects of it, and he weeps, because there's no man.

There's no one to fulfill God's destiny for mankind. There's no one to be what God wants to happen. There's no one to be the perfect servant, to carry out the will of heaven upon the earth.

There's no one. For I beheld, and there was no man, even among them. And there was no counselor that, when I asked of them, could answer a word.

Behold, they're all vanity. Their God is saying, behold, my servant, whom I uphold, my elect, my chosen one, in whom my soul delights. I have put my spirit upon him.

He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall cry. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flanks shall he not quench. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail.

Hallelujah. At last, at last, behold, my servant, he shall not fail. All the others had failed, failure after failure after failure, in spite of all the provisions that God gave, in spite of all the new beginnings that he made possible to them.

Behold, my servant, he shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law. There are two streams of prophecy that run through the scripture. There's one

that's sometimes called the suffering servant line or thread of prophecy, and there's the other one which is the messianic one in the sense that the Jewish people would regard it.

That's to say there are kingly prophecies and there are servant prophecies. The kingly prophecies, of course, were very encouraging to the people of Israel. There was going to be a descendant of David who would sit upon the throne, and they, the people of David, would be on his right hand and upon his left.

They would be the people in places of greatest authority, ready and able to exercise a judgment and a rule over all the nations of the earth. I tremble to use this phrase, but please don't misunderstand me. I'll say more maybe another time.

They were going to be the master race. They were going to be the master race over all the other races of the earth. All the Gentiles would be at their feet.

All the treasures and the wealth of the Gentiles would come into them. This is how they saw it. They were quite convinced that this is the way that it would be.

Those kingly prophecies they delighted in. But then there was this other thread of prophecy that you get in the book of Isaiah that speaks of a servant who isn't boisterous and strident, who doesn't come shouting and forcing everything to do things they don't want to do, and who ultimately is so disfigured that he's hardly recognizable as a human being, and looks as though he has been afflicted and smitten of God. Those prophecies, they weren't quite sure what to make of them.

When the Lord Jesus came to the River Jordan, John the Baptist was there, and this is John's testimony. He says, the reason I am here is so that he should be manifest to Israel. And John came, and he spoke, and he baptized.

And then there was the occasion when the Lord Jesus came to him. I'm just wondering how much to try and squeeze in. The Lord Jesus came to him, and he was baptized.

And when he was baptized, there was a voice that spoke from heaven that said, this, this is him. This is him, he's here. This is my son, the beloved one, in whom my soul delights.

John said that this was the commission that God had given him, that he would see the Spirit of God coming on someone and remaining upon him, and that he would be the one. And he saw it. He saw the Spirit of God coming upon the Lord Jesus.

He heard the voice from the open heaven. This is him. This is my servant.

This is my son. Do you remember what God had said way back? Israel is my son, my firstborn son. Let my son go, that he may serve me.

Here is the Son now. Here is the Son who is the servant. Behold, my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delights.

Here is Jeshurun. Here is the true Israel. Here is the one who will be all that God ever wanted him to be.

And the isles shall wait for his law. We've got to stop because otherwise you'll be waiting for your lunch. Let's just pray.

Oh Lord, thank you that your confidence was always in the second man, always in the true Israel. Thank you Lord, you knew the end from the beginning. Thank you Lord, you determined and it should be.

Thank you that you are the one who ultimately works all things after the counsel of your own will. Thank you for this one, Lord, when there was no man. Thank you for your man.

Oh, thank you for this holy one, this upright one, this one who perfectly interprets God to us. This one who is able to say without any boast, if you've seen me, you've seen him, Philip. Oh Lord, we thank you for him.

We do and we pray, Lord, for that continuing work of your spirit to take every veil that we may see him more and more clearly and may see him as the one who has perfectly executed the will of Jehovah, perfectly finished his work and sat down. We thank you, Lord Jesus, and we love you. Amen.

Oh Lord, oh Lord, give us the eagle look, Lord, that can see over all the passing disappointments, all the little obstacles, all the hindrances, all the twists and the turns, and isn't troubled by any of them, but can see things from another perspective. Oh God, teach us, Lord, to wait upon you. Teach us, Lord, how to leave it all behind and to come and wait upon you and to know a heavenly orientation, a heavenly perspective of all things.

Amen. Amen. Oh, hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Oh, I can just hear somehow in my spirit, you know, God just saying, behold my servant.

Look, look, look, he's here. He's here. This is him.

He's here. He's here. Oh, he's here, brothers and sisters.

He's here. He's here. Hallelujah.

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