



# ISAIAH 48

## OUR ALL-KNOWING GOD ~ CONSIDER GOD’S MIGHT ~ COME TOGETHER AND WALK WITH ME

The shift of attention from Babylon back to Israel is far from flattering. Their self-righteous talk of the Yahweh and the holy adds up to defeat with their persistent idolatry; they emerge in fact as hardened hypocrites. It is a darker picture than that of the faithlessness and even the coldness, although it was anticipated in the sin against the light. The argument from prophecy, previously directed against the heathen, now has to be turned against God’s own people, now determined skeptics.

All this, however, serves only to reveal God’s patience: unmerited, constructive and resolute. After all his outspokenness he can still affirm both his call and his love, and give the liberating command, leave Babylon! It will reappear through the coming chapters. Yet this is no swan song; the high price of self-will is stated and re-stated as nothing less than a farewell to peace, i.e. to all health of soul and society. The sad realism of v 22 will reappear at 57:21, and the book will end on the still harsher note.

| English Standard (ESV)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Passion Notes                                                                                                                                                                           | Passion Translation (TPT)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p>Isaiah 48:1 Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the LORD and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right. <sup>2</sup> For they call themselves after the holy city, and stay themselves on the God of Israel; the LORD of hosts is his name.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> “The former things I declared of old; they went out from my mouth, and I announced them; then suddenly I did them, and they came to pass. <sup>4</sup> Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass, <sup>5</sup> I declared them to you from of old, before they came to pass I announced them to you, lest you should say, ‘My idol did them, my carved image and my metal image commanded them.’</p> | <p><b>a</b> 48:1 Or “who cause the God of Israel to be remembered.”</p> <p><b>b</b> 48:3 Or “They came forth from my mouth.”</p> <p><b>c</b> 48:4 Or “your forehead hard as brass.”</p> | <p><b>Our All-Knowing God</b></p> <p>Isaiah 48:1 “Listen carefully, O Jacob’s tribes, you who are called by the name Israel and come from the lineage of Judah, who solemnly swear in the name of Yahweh and claim to worship the God of Israel. <b>a</b> But there is no truth or righteousness in your confession! <sup>2</sup> Indeed, you name yourselves after the holy city and say that you depend upon Israel’s God. Yahweh, the Commander of Angel Armies, is his name.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> “Long ago I prophesied things that would happen. I issued decrees <b>b</b> and made them known. Then suddenly, I acted and made them happen. <sup>4</sup> I knew you were stubborn. Your neck is like a rod of iron, and you’re as hard-hearted as brass! <b>c</b> <sup>5</sup> Long ago I told you these things. Long before they happened I proclaimed them so you would never be able to say, ‘My idols did this; my wood and metal idols decreed it!’”</p> |

| English Standard (ESV)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 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| <p>6 “You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I announce to you new things, hidden things that you have not known. 7 They are created now, not long ago; before today you have never heard of them, lest you should say, ‘Behold, I knew them.’ 8 You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened. For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a rebel.</p> <p>9 “For my name’s sake I defer my anger; for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. 10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction. 11 For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.</p> <p>12 “Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last. 13 My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand forth together.</p> <p>14 “Assemble, all of you, and listen! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans. 15 I, even I, have spoken and called him; I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way. 16 Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there.” And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit.</p> <p>17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go. 18 Oh that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea; 19 your offspring would have been like the sand, and your descendants like its grains; their name would never be cut off or destroyed from before me.”</p> <p>20 Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it out to the end of the earth; say, “The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!” 21 They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and the water gushed out.</p> <p>22 “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”</p> | <p><b>d</b> 48:6 Or “declare.”</p> <p><b>e</b> 48:6 Or “You should tell this to others.” The Hebrew of this sentence is uncertain.</p> <p><b>f</b> 48:10 The implication is that if God had left them in the fire to melt down all their dross, they would still be there in the fire with nothing left of them. God limits the intensity and the timing of our every trial and uses the furnace of adversity to make us more like Christ. See 1 Cor. 10:13.</p> <p><b>g</b> 48:11 God promises to deliver, refine, and rescue his people so that his own name and identity as the God of gods will not be defamed. Rescue is as sure as God’s identity.</p> <p><b>h</b> 48:14 Most scholars view this man to be Cyrus.</p> <p><b>i</b> 48:16 Or “from the time of its occurring.”</p> <p><b>j</b> 48:16 Or “has sent me and his Spirit.”</p> <p><b>k</b> 48:18 Or “prosperity (shalom).”</p> <p><b>l</b> 48:18 Or “the river.” See John 7:37–39.</p> <p><b>m</b> 48:18 Or “righteousness.”</p> <p><b>n</b> 48:19 See Gen. 22:17; 32:12.</p> <p><b>o</b> 48:20 Or “shouting.” The key to fleeing from the Babylonish (Babylon means “confusion”) systems of the world is to go out with a joyous song. See Jer. 33:7–11.</p> <p><b>p</b> 48:21 See 1 Cor. 10:1–11; John 19:34.</p> | <p>6 You have heard what I foretold and have seen it all unfold, so admit <b>d</b> that it happened and I was right! <b>e</b> From now on I will tell you about new things never seen before, hidden things, well-guarded secrets you know nothing about. 7 They are created now, brand new today, not long ago! You’ve never heard of them before now, so you cannot say, ‘Oh, I already knew about that.’</p> <p>8 You have never heard nor understood; your ear had not been opened beforehand. Though I knew that you would fight against me as a rebel from birth, 9 yet, for the sake of my great name and for my glory, I held back my anger and was patient with you so I did not whittle you down to nothing. 10 See, I have purified you in the furnace of adversity, but not like silver—I have refined you in the fire. <b>f</b> 11 For my own sake alone I will do it, so my name will not be dishonored. <b>g</b> I will not yield my glory to another.</p> <p><b>Consider God’s Might</b></p> <p>12 “Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am the One and Only, the First and the Last. 13 With my mighty hand I laid the foundation of the earth; with the span of my right hand I spread out the cosmos. And when I speak to them, they both stand at attention. 14 Now, all of you gather around and listen. Which of the gods has foretold these things? I, Yahweh, love this man, and he <b>h</b> will carry out my purpose against Babylon. He will be my “arm of might” against the Babylonians! 15 I am the “one; yes, I am the one who called him by name before he was born. I have led him forward on a prosperous, successful path.</p> <p><b>Come Together and Walk with Me</b></p> <p>16 “Draw near to me and listen: “From the beginning, I have not spoken in secret. From the beginning of time, <b>i</b> I was there.” And now Lord Yahweh has sent me, empowered by <b>j</b> his Spirit!</p> <p>17 This is what Yahweh, your Kinsman-Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel says: “I am Yahweh, your God. I am the One who teaches you how to succeed and who leads you step by step in the way you should go. 18 If only you had listened to my commands, then peace <b>k</b> would have flowed like a <b>l</b> river for you and success <b>m</b> would wash over you like waves of the sea. 19 Your children would have multiplied to become like the sand of the seashore <b>n</b> and your descendants like grains of sand. There would be no end of them, and I would not cut them off.”</p> <p>20 Go! Leave Babylon! Flee from Chaldea! Announce it with joyous singing! <b>o</b> Let everyone know! Proclaim it to the ends of the earth! Say it loud and clear: “Yahweh has rescued his servant Jacob!” 21 The people weren’t thirsty when he led them through barren, desolate deserts, for he broke open the rock for water to flow for them. The rock was split open, and rivers gushed “out! <b>p</b></p> <p>22 “There is never peace,” Yahweh says, “for the wicked.</p> |

## Bible Knowledge Commentary

JOHN A. MARTIN

### - AN EXHORTATION FOR ISRAEL (CHAP. 48)

#### • An exhortation to remember God's prophecies (48:1-11)

- **48:1-5.** The LORD reminded His people—called the house of Jacob ... Israel, and the line of Judah—of their hypocrisy. They took oaths, invoking God's name, but they were not righteous. They thought that being citizens of Jerusalem (the holy city; cf. 52:1), though they were not living there, and claiming to rely on ... the LORD, were adequate. Comfortable in the Babylonian Empire (and later the Persian Empire), they considered it unimportant to go back to Jerusalem. The LORD said He had prophesied what would happen (48:3), apparently referring to the coming Captivity. But knowing of the coming Exile, the people were stubborn (v. 4), refusing to change their ways. Again one reason God made those predictions was to point up His superiority to idols.
- **48:6-8.** Israel had disregarded the previous prophecies, so God would give her new prophecies (v. 6), predictions that God's wrath would be delayed (cf. v. 9) and that she would be freed from captivity. Those plans were created now, not that God had never thought of them before, but that they would be put into effect at that time. From Deuteronomy 30:1-5, Israel knew she would be brought back to the land after captivity, and her dwelling in the land was assured by the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:18-21). But until Isaiah's prophecies were given she did not know how God would deliver her. This was so the people would not feel smug (Isa. 48:7b), thinking their own cunning had set them free. They actually were spiritually insensitive (v. 8; cf. 42:20; 43:8) because they were treacherous and rebellious. So their physical and spiritual deliverance would come not from their goodness or their own plans, but from God's grace.
- **48:9-11.** The Lord would delay His wrath, that is, withhold it so His people could return to Judah. This would be for His sake primarily (vv. 9, 11; cf. 43:25). The Exile was to refine them so they would return to the land in belief. That refining, however, was not with silver. This means either that the refining was not accomplished with money, or that the process could not be compared to silver, or that unlike silver which becomes pure, the nation would not. Whatever the meaning, the Captivity was like being in a furnace, to test them, not destroy them. If God would go back on His word about the return, His reputation would be defamed.

#### • An exhortation to note God's sovereignty (48:12-19)

- **48:12-15.** Urging the nation to listen to Him (cf. comments on 46:3), God once again spoke of His unique position as the only God. (On the First and the Last see comments on 44:6.) Isaiah repeatedly wrote about two proofs of His uniqueness: (a) His creative power (cf. 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18; 51:13, 16) and (b) His ability to foretell the future, in this case, the fall of Babylon by means of Cyrus, God's chosen ally (cf. "shepherd" and "anointed," 44:28; 45:1). God called him and would help him succeed. No other god could have predicted this.
- **48:16.** The LORD, who is speaking, said He had not been secretive about Cyrus' defeat of Babylon. Suggestions on who is speaking in the second part of verse 16, beginning with the words And now, include Cyrus, Israel, Isaiah, and the Messiah. Probably the Messiah, [Vol. 1, p. 1103] God's Servant, is intended because of His association (as in 42:1; also note 11:1-2) with the Spirit. Just as Cyrus would not fail in his mission (48:15), so the Messiah-Servant, sent by God with the Holy Spirit on Him, will not fail in His mission.

- **48:17-19.** The LORD, Israel's Redeemer (cf. comments on 41:14) and Holy One, had constantly been teaching and guiding Israel through the Law. But they had not paid attention to His commands. Had they done so, they would have experienced not the Exile but peace and righteousness, and none of their children would have been killed.
- **An exhortation to flee Babylon** (48:20-21)
  - **48:20-21.** With Cyrus' edict (2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4) allowing the Jews to return home, God urged His people to leave Babylon quickly (flee). Because this return was like being redeemed (i.e., "to buy out of slavery"; cf. 43:1)—this time from Babylon, not Egypt—the people could rejoice. After the Egyptian Exodus God provided water in the deserts and from the rock (cf. Ex. 17:1-7). Here too, it is implied, God would provide for them in their second "Exodus."
- **The absence of peace for the wicked** (48:22)
  - **48:22.** In contrast with joy (v. 20) for those who obey the Lord there is no peace ... for the wicked, either in the nation Israel or among Gentile nations. This brief statement is repeated in 57:21.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. It is a sad day when the followers of Jesus become comfortable with their sin. Unfortunately, it is much easier to see in others than in ourselves. What would be some of the indicators that a believer has become comfortable with their sin?
2. Spiritual insensitivity is a deadly condition. When you find yourself becoming spiritually unaware, what is it that you are lacking? What seems to open the door to spiritual insensitivity in your life? Are there any common characteristics you noticed in others when they become spiritually dull?
3. God's refining happens through heat or fire. Have you ever felt the "heat" of God's love? What is the goal of God's refining love?
4. God helps us succeed even when we don't have a leg to stand on and have turned our gaze away from him. Why do you think God is so determined to make help his people succeed? What is it about his desire to help us that we can employ in lending a hand to others?
5. God brought his people out of exile from Egypt, albeit, without much help from his people. What could have been a relatively short trip ended up taking close to 40 years! In this chapter he assures them he will deliver them from Babylon in much the same way. Why do you think the Lord is so determined to give his people a second chance? Is it easy or hard for you to give people in your life a second chance? What is it that makes it hard for you to give someone a second chance?