



# Highlights From the Book of Isaiah

To Download this lesson go to:

<http://www.purifiedbyfaith.com/Isaiah/Isaiah.htm>

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/ernest-meissonier/isaiah>

# The LORD's Coming Salvation (52:1-12)

- This passage describes the coming release of the exiles from captivity.
- It begins with a call for Zion to “*Wake up!*” and realize that a change has taken place in her fortunes (52:1–2).
- Isaiah records two oracles of the LORD (“*this is what the LORD says...*”) which explains how this turn-around has been made possible (52:3–6).
- Then there is a description of the good news of release reaching Zion (52:7–10).
- This is then followed by a description of the triumphant procession of the people out of captivity to their new dwelling place in Zion (52:11–12).

# The LORD's Coming Salvation (52:1-12)

- Babylon is never explicitly mentioned in our text because there are actually *two* aspects of the LORD's salvation of his people being described here.
- The physical return of God's people to the land of promise gives us a tangible picture of a far more difficult achievement that is to take place – the reversing of the people's *alienation* from the LORD and the renewing their fellowship with him.
- Today's text serves as a setup for the next section of Isaiah (52:13–53:12) where we will see a vivid description of the suffering that the Servant must undergo in order to provide for this liberation and restoration of his people.

# The LORD's Coming Salvation (52:1-12)

- Today's passage can be broken into *four* parts:
  - Cleansed and Set Free (52:1–2)
  - The Basis for Deliverance (52:3–6)
  - The Good News Arrives (52:7–10)
  - The Sacred Procession (52:11–12)



# Cleansed and Set Free (52:1–2)

*52:1 Wake up! Wake up! Clothe yourself with strength, O Zion! Put on your beautiful clothes, O Jerusalem, holy city. For uncircumcised and unclean pagans will no longer invade you. <sup>2</sup> Shake off the dirt! Get up, captive Jerusalem. Take off the iron chains around your neck, O captive daughter Zion.*

# Cleansed and Set Free (52:1–2)

- In the previous chapter there is a plea made by **Zion** for the **LORD** to “*Wake up! Wake up!*” and clothe himself with strength – to rouse himself as in the days of old when he delivered them from Egypt. (cf. 51:9).
- Here the repeated call “*Wake up! Wake up!*” turns Zion’s plea to the LORD back on Zion herself!
- **She** is the one who has been sleeping and not paying attention to what was going on around her.
- Therefore **she** is called on to shake off her stupor and act in accordance with the status that is rightfully hers since the punishment for her sin is now over.
- Zion had asked the **LORD** to display **his** “*strength*” (cf. 51:9), but now **she** is told to “*clothe [herself] with strength*” that has been made available to her while she slept.

# Cleansed and Set Free (52:1–2)

- She is encouraged to “*put on [her] beautiful clothes*”, to assume her *real* character and use what has been given to her, so that she may function as the LORD had always intended.
- As they put on their new garments, they will be enabled to realize the goal the LORD has had for them to become Jerusalem the “*holy city*”, the place set apart for the presence and worship of the LORD.
- Jerusalem will live up to this description because the LORD will ensure that no admittance will be given to:
  - the “*uncircumcised*” – those who have no entitlement to be there because they lack the mark of entry into the covenant community
  - the “*unclean*” – those whose character and presence would pollute the sacred site

# Cleansed and Set Free (52:1–2)

- The “*uncircumcised*” are not *just* the foreigners.
- Circumcision was *primarily* a sign of *spiritual renewal* – circumcision of the *heart*:
  - *I will punish the Egyptians, the Judeans, the Edomites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, and all the desert... I will do so because none of the people of those nations are really circumcised in the LORD's sight. Moreover, none of the people of Israel are circumcised when it comes to their hearts.* (Jer 9:26)
- The “*unclean*” could *also* be found within ethnic Israel, as Isaiah himself laments in Isaiah 6:5:
  - *Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*
- What is in view here is not primarily political, economic or military success, but *spiritual holiness*.
- What is pictured here is further explored in chapter 56, and will be finally achieved in the new Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 21:27; 22:11–15).



# Cleansed and Set Free (52:1–2)

- Zion is exhorted to “*Shake off the dirt!*” to “*Get up*” from the ground and rid herself of all of physical and spiritual degradation.
- Her deliverance has been provided for her by the LORD, and they are exhorted to “*take off the iron chains around [their] neck*”
- Prisoners of war were often marched off into captivity tied neck to neck with a long rope.
- But now she has been **freed**, and so she is no longer a helpless victim, hampered by the restrictions of her captors.
- “*Daughter Zion*” (cf. 1:8), who had been “*captive*” is now elevated to royal status.

# The Basis for Deliverance (52:3–6)

*52:3 For this is what the LORD says: “You were sold for nothing, and you will not be redeemed for money.”<sup>4</sup> For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “In the beginning my people went to live temporarily in Egypt; Assyria oppressed them for no good reason.<sup>5</sup> And now, what do we have here?” says the LORD. “Indeed my people have been carried away for nothing, those who rule over them taunt,” says the LORD, “and my name is constantly slandered all day long.<sup>6</sup> For this reason my people will know my name; for this reason they will know at that time that I am the one who says, ‘Here I am.’”*

# The Basis for Deliverance (52:3–6)

- In this section we see that the reason *why* Jerusalem can get up, shake off the dust, take off her chains, put on beautiful clothing, and sit in majesty – it is because the Lord has delivered her!
- God had not been *forced* to hand over Judah to her enemies in order to satisfy some creditor – he had not been forced to sell her in order to pay his debts.
- Therefore the LORD is free to redeem her and bring her back – but *not “for money”*.
- The only barrier to our relationship with God is the offended justice of God.
- If a way can be found to break down *that* barrier, *nothing* can keep from his salvation.

# The Basis for Deliverance (52:3–6)

- Next he begins to enumerate the foreign powers that have oppressed Israel in the past in order to show that they have *no claim* on her.
- “*In the beginning*” looks back to the beginning of the history of “*my people*”, when they entered Egypt voluntarily with a “guest” status, expecting to be treated hospitably.
- But instead they became the innocent victims of a tyrannical regime who treated them harshly (cf. Exod 1:13–14).
- Assyria too had acted aggressively against the people for “*no good reason*”.
- On *neither* occasion did the oppressor have *any rights* over the LORD’s people, and so God had intervened on their behalf.
- While no *specific* mention is made of Babylon, the inference is that, no matter *who* had assailed his people, the LORD would have acted in a similar fashion.



# The Basis for Deliverance (52:3–6)

- The people had been delivered from past tyrannies, and “*And now*” he moves on to consider their *present* crisis.
- The covenant people “*have been carried away*” into captivity and exploited “*for nothing*” (cf. 52:4).
- Therefore the LORD will again have to intervene to correct this injustice.
- And to make matters worse, the *heathen nations* have *wrongly* assumed that because Judah has been exiled, the LORD must be *incapable* of saving his people!
- Therefore they dismiss the claims made about him and disregard all that he has revealed himself to be.
- This too was an intolerable situation which the LORD would not allow to continue – he *will* deliver his people!

# The Basis for Deliverance (52:3–6)

- *“For this reason my people will know my name”* – When the LORD delivers his people, they will have a deep conviction regarding the LORD’s person and promises and will no longer harbor any doubts about his capability, or his willingness, to act on their behalf. <sup>1</sup>
- *“they will know at that time that I am the one who says, ‘Here I am.’”*
- In this deliverance, the LORD’s presence will be so clear to his people that it will be as though they see their God standing in their midst, identifying himself and saying: *“Here I am.”* <sup>2</sup>
- It is in this spirit that Zion is to wake up, clothe herself in strength, and become the true people of God he has made them to be. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mackay, John L. – *A Study Commentary on Isaiah Volume 2: Chapters 40-66* – pp. 320–322.

<sup>2</sup> Leupold, H. C. – *Exposition of Isaiah, Volume 2* (p. 215)

# The Good News Arrives (52:7–10)

*52:7 How delightful it is to see approaching over the mountains the feet of a messenger who announces peace, a messenger who brings good news, who announces deliverance, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns!”<sup>8</sup> Listen, your watchmen shout; in unison they shout for joy, for they see with their very own eyes the LORD’s return to Zion.<sup>9</sup> In unison give a joyful shout, O ruins of Jerusalem! For the LORD consoles his people; he [redeems] Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> The LORD reveals his royal power in the sight of all the nations; the entire earth sees our God deliver.*

# The Good News Arrives (52:7–10)

- Here Isaiah caps his argument with a graphic illustration.
- He pictures a besieged city breathlessly awaiting the news of the outcome of a decisive conflict.
- If the news is victory, they are delivered; if the news is defeat, all is lost.
- Suddenly, on a distant hill a runner is seen. What is the news?
- As he comes nearer it can be seen that he is waving a victory palm and not so much running as dancing.
- The Lord has won! Let the singing begin!
- The anticipation of salvation that began at 40:9 has now reached its climax:
  - *Go up on a high mountain, O herald Zion! Shout out loudly, O herald Jerusalem! Shout, don't be afraid! Say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" Look, the sovereign LORD comes as a victorious warrior; his military power establishes his rule. Look, his reward is with him; his prize goes before him. (Isaiah 40:9-10)*



# The Good News Arrives (52:7–10)

- How “*delightful*” it is to see the “*feet*” of this “*messenger*”!
- This “*messenger*” is a bearer of the “*good news*” of God’s salvation.
- Here the message is this: “*peace, good news, deliverance – Your God reigns!*”.
- What does God’s reign entail?
  - It entails a condition where all things are in their proper relation to each other, with nothing left hanging, incomplete, or unfulfilled (“*peace*”);
  - it entails a condition of freedom from every bondage, but particularly the bondage resultant from sin (“*deliverance, i.e. salvation*”).
- Where God reigns, these things follow.

# The Good News Arrives (52:7–10)

- Of course, this is exactly what the Christian faith understands its “*good news*” to be.
- This is the content that Christ instructed his disciples to preach from village to village in Matt 10:7: “*As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near!’*”
- That which **Isaiah 52:7-10** had spoken of was now present and at hand!
- And so we see that Paul’s quotation of the opening words of the verse in Rom 10:15 “*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!*” (Rom 10:15 ESV) is *precisely in keeping* with the sense of this verse.
- The Christian gospel is what Isaiah was declaring: the good news of the universal rule of God in the world accompanied by peace and salvation.

# The Good News Arrives (52:7–10)

- Now all those who had been anxiously awaiting the messenger's report break out simultaneously into a loud shout of joy.
- For one thing is now perfectly clear to them:
- The Lord has again turned to his people with favor, he has come back and will dwell in their midst as in days of old.
- Where his glory had departed from his holy city with the coming of the Babylonian captivity, this glory again enters in to take up its dwelling there.

# The Good News Arrives (52:7–10)

- Verses 9 and 10 are a jubilant hymn bringing to a triumphant conclusion a line of thought that depicts what the Lord has done.
- It is as though the prophet offers for the use of the congregation a hymn suitable for the occasion.
- At the same time he exhorts the people to be sure to offer sacrifices of thanksgiving.
- But very strangely and quite poetically he addresses himself to the “waste places of Jerusalem” in what some have called “an exuberant paradox” to “sing together” in harmonious chorus.
- It is as though all along even the ruins themselves had felt the unhappy state of the nation.
- There could be no greater comfort for the holy city than to have her freedom restored.



# The Good News Arrives (52:7–10)

- The Lord's blessing for his people is further described as him revealing "*his royal power in the sight of all the nations.*"
- Even the dimmed eye of the Gentiles cannot help but see that the Lord has gone into action.
- In fact, "*the entire earth sees our God deliver.*"
- Israel's return from Captivity was an event that deserved world-wide attention.

# The Sacred Procession (52:11–12)

<sup>52:11</sup> *Leave! Leave! Get out of there! Don't touch anything unclean! Get out of it! Stay pure, you who carry the LORD's holy items.*

<sup>12</sup> *Yet do not depart quickly or leave in a panic. For the LORD goes before you; the God of Israel is your rear guard.*

# The Sacred Procession (52:11–12)

- Following the call for Zion to rejoice in the LORD's expected deliverance that we saw in the previous section (52:7-10), the prophet now turns to address those *currently* in exile and urges them also to respond to what has been achieved on their behalf.
- They are told: *“Leave! Leave! Get out of there!”*
- More is involved here than the mere geographical requirements of a return from exile.
- What is in view here is the spiritual separation from all that would mar their fellowship with the LORD.

# The Sacred Procession (52:11–12)

- This is a call to the people of God to be done with all the polluting influences of their former existence, and to enter into their inheritance.
- Anything “*unclean*” is unfit for the service of God.
- More positively, as they “*Get out of [their place of exile]!*”, they are to “*stay pure*” by purging away any impediment that would keep them from being able to “*carry the LORD’s holy items*”
- Those who are the LORD’s restored people are to stand apart from every pagan influence and ready themselves to engage in his service with the purity that he requires of them.



# The Sacred Procession (52:11–12)

- This new exodus will be different from the exodus from Egypt in that they “*do not depart quickly or leave in a panic*”
- This journey back to Jerusalem will be both a sacred religious procession and the victory march of a conquering army on its return home.
- During the return journey, they will enjoy the same degree of safety as in the first exodus, for the LORD will lead his people and serve as their rear guard (“*For the LORD goes before you; the God of Israel is your rear guard.*”).

# The Sacred Procession (52:11–12)

- This passage is yet another example of where the coming deliverance of the people of Israel from Babylon captivity foreshadows a greater future deliverance of Israel and the nations from their bondage to sin.
- The prophet perceives these two events as one panoramic picture.
- The greater future deliverance will be orchestrated by God, but he will have to send someone from outside Israel (i.e. the servant, the coming Messiah, who we now know as Jesus Christ) to carry it through to completion.

# Next Time

I plan to look at the *New Testament citations* of **Isaiah 52:1-12**

Specifically we will be looking at these ideas:

- God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you (**Isaiah 52:5** cited in **Roman 2:23**)
- How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news (**Isaiah 52:7** cited in **Romans 10:15**)
- Go out from their midst... Touch no unclean thing (**Isaiah 52:11** cited in **2 Cor 6:17** )



# Class Discussion Time





# Class Discussion Time

- As we have seen, today's text uses a historical physical event in the ***past*** (the deliverance of the Israelites from Babylonian captivity) to paint a picture of a ***present reality*** for us as New Testament believers: we have been deliverance (saved!) from the bondage to sin and restored to fellowship with a ***Holy*** God.
- With this deliverance there is an expectation of the kind of people that we are now to be:
  - We are to “*Wake up! Wake up! **Clothe [ourselves] with strength... Put on [our] beautiful clothes**” as inhabitants of a “***holy city***”.*
- This is reminiscent of New Testament teaching like we see in Ephesians 4:
  - ***Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*** (Eph 4:22-24 ESV)

## Class Discussion Time

- Furthermore there is a call for the people of God to ***do away with all the polluting influences*** of their former existence.
- The LORD's restored people are to stand apart from every pagan influence and ready themselves to engage in his service with the ***purity*** that he requires of them.
- Do you think this that salvation is viewed this way in most churches today?
- Or do you think there is more of an emphasis on getting saved so that you can “get your ticket punched and be saved from going to hell?”