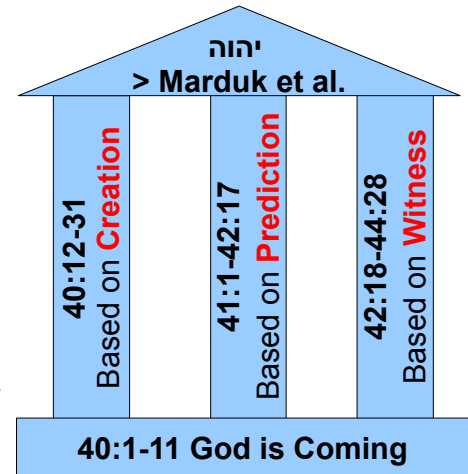


Isaiah 45-48

We identified three main cycles in ch. 40-66, each nine chapters long, and each ending with a proclamation of doom on the wicked. We have finished five of the chapters in the first section, and they exhibit a clean rhetoric arguing for the superiority of the Lord to pagan gods (the “house” diagram). Now we explore what remains of the first nine chapters.

These four chapters pick up the climactic theme of the third pillar, the promise of the end of Israel’s captivity, through the downfall of Babylon and the ascent of Cyrus. They have a coherent internal structure, of three cycles. Each cycle begins with a prophecy of the coming of Cyrus (vv. 45:1-7, 45:13, 48:14-15), then focuses on the blessing and judgment that await the hearers. The outer cycles are very brief (9 or 10 vv each) and straightforward, while the center one is much longer (55 vv) and more complex.



So the rhetoric of the overall section, ch. 40-48, goes like this:

- 40:1-11, God is coming
- 40:12-31, He is greater than the idols because he is the creator.
- 41:1-42:17, He is greater than the idols because he can predict the future.
- 42:18-44:28, He redeems Israel so that Israel can bear witness to his creative and predictive power, in preparation for their deliverance from Babylon.
- 45:1-48:15, The coming of Cyrus faces Israel and the nations with a choice of two responses.

The section has several distinct expressions:

- Only in this section, the expression of God’s uniqueness, אֵין עֹד. This is a fitting culmination to the first section of 40-66, with its emphasis on the Lord’s superiority over the pagan gods.
- Unusual concentration of שָׁמַע. Occurrences per word in these chapters is 1.2%, compared to 0.5% overall.
- Throughout, God appeals to his predictive and creative power, the foundation of his claim to uniqueness in the previous chapters of this section..

45:1-10, First Cycle (10vv)

1-7 God calls Cyrus

God first makes a statement *about* Cyrus in the third person (v. 1), then makes three promises *to* Cyrus in the second person (2-3, 4-5a, 5b-7), each with a statement of purposed marked by the Hebrew particle לְמַעַן.

1, Third Person Description

The Lord begins by describing Cyrus in terms reminiscent of the nation's king

45:1 Thus saith the LORD to his anointed—This is a common title for the king, throughout the former prophets. Recall David's reluctance to harm Saul "because he is the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam 24:6; 26:9; 2 Sam 1:14).

to Cyrus,--Yet this is no Israelite, but a pagan king. By calling him by name, the Lord demonstrates his predictive power.

whose right hand I have holden,--In 41:13, God promised his servant, "I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, 'Fear not; I will help thee.'" Why would the Lord grant these honors to a pagan? The next two couplets describe the purpose, showing two facets of his conquest over the known world. In each case, an infinitive is continued with an imperfect.

to subdue nations before him;--The first couplet describes his conquest over political institutions and other rulers.

and I will loose the loins of kings,--To subdue a nation, one must break the resistance of its leader. "Loose the loins" is the opposite of "gird up loins," which one does in preparation for vigorous physical activity, to keep long garments from tripping the legs. Elijah did this after the contest on Mt. Carmel:

1Ki 18:46 he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

The kings have been girded for battle, but now God will cause them to retire.

to open before him the two leaved gates doors; and the gates shall not be shut;--Next, the Lord focuses attention on the physical defenses that he will remove before Cyrus. The "two-leaved gates" are properly "doors," as in a palace, while the second instance of "gates" refers more naturally to the gates of a city. Thus both fortification and palace will open before him.

The meaning of the promise is absolutely clear from the text, and requires no extrabiblical confirmation. But it is interesting that secular historians, with no interest in supporting the accuracy of the Bible, confirm that Babylon's gates were open when Cyrus attacked.

Herodotus (484-425 BC) records that Cyrus diverted the Euphrates, which flowed through the city, so that he could enter on the riverbed. He notes (1.191),

Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter the city, but would have destroyed them utterly; for **they would have made fast all the street gates** which gave access to the river, and mounting upon the walls along both sides of the stream, would so have caught the enemy, as it were, in a trap. But, as it was, the Persians came upon them by surprise and so took the city.

Xenophon (430-354 BC) also recounts that the gates were open:

As the din grew louder and louder, those within became aware of the tumult, till, the king bidding them see what it meant, some of them opened the gates and ran out. Gatas [the Persian general] and his men, seeing the gates swing wide, darted in, hard on the heels of the others who fled back again, and they chased them at the sword's point into the presence of the

king. (Cryopaedia, Book 7, Chap. 5, 28-29)

Now the Lord turns from third to second person, addressing Cyrus directly. Each paragraph

- describes a divine action,
- gives a purpose, and
- relates it to the Lord's own glory.

We often had occasion to remark in ch. 43 how the Lord's deliverance of his Servant was for the Lord's purposes:

43:6-7 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7 *Even* every one that is called by my name: for **I have created him for my glory**, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

43:21 This people have I formed **for myself**; they shall shew forth my praise.

43:25 I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions **for mine own sake**, and will not remember thy sins.

The same principle holds true with his manipulation of pagan nations. All is for his glory.

We will see a progression in each of these three themes as we go through the paragraphs.

2-3, Destroy Obstacles so that Cyrus may know

The first set of actions deal with physical things external to Cyrus.

2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight:--The word translated "crooked" appears only here, and is problematic. The root means to be exalted, and the expression likely refers to some sort of obstacle or barrier that the Lord flattens before Cyrus.¹

I will break in pieces the gates doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:--This promise reprises the last bicolon of v. 1. Because of the Lord's intervention, no fortification can stand before Cyrus. Again, the secular historians illustrate the setting. Herodotus (1.179) writes,

In the circuit of the wall are a hundred gates, all of brass, with brazen lintels and side-posts.

3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places,--The treasuries of nations will fall open before him; riches that were kept secure, in locked windowless vaults, now are his possession. Jeremiah reflects on this conquest from Babylon's perspective:

Jer 50:37 A sword *is* upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that *are* in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: **a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.**

Jer 51:13 O thou that dwellest upon many waters, **abundant in treasures**, thine end is come, *and* the measure of thy covetousness.

¹ Southwood, VT 25 (1975) 801, repoints to achieve article + דורים, a Babylonian term for "walls," which offers a nice parallel with the doors and bars of the next bicolon.

that thou mayest know—The purpose of this first set of actions is to inform Cyrus himself. The scope will widen in the successive paragraphs.

that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name,--As elsewhere, “call by name” קרא בשם means “to call out the name,” “to proclaim the name.” The point is not that God has summoned Cyrus, but that he has declared his name publicly, years before his appearance.

am the God of Israel.--The point is not that Cyrus will know the Lord, but that he will recognize the Lord as Israel’s God. This is the first step in the divine honor that the Lord claims to himself. He will go farther in the next two paragraphs.

4-5a, Choose Cyrus for the sake of Israel

The parallel is not clear in English, but the same Hebrew particle appears here as in the other two, though this time the purpose comes before the action. All three elements (action, purpose, and divine honor) are extended.

4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect,--This time the purpose comes first. In the first paragraph, the purpose focused on Cyrus. Now it is broadened to the nation Israel, who is still identified as the Lord’s servant. Regardless of the honorary titles he is given, Cyrus has not replaced the Lord’s proper servant.

I have even called thee by thy name:--The first point of the action in this paragraph is God’s personal designation of Cyrus, the miraculous prophecy that he has invoked over and over. We have moved from God’s preparation of Cyrus’ environment, to his designation of Cyrus himself.

I have surnamed thee,--The verb means to give a title of honor. Elihu uses it in rebuking Job’s friends:

Job 32:21-22 Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me **give flattering titles** unto man. 22 For I know not to **give flattering titles**; *in so doing* my maker would soon take me away.

Cyrus was recognized as emperor of most of the ancient world; God claims the credit for elevating him to this lofty status.

though thou hast not known me.--Remarkably, God chooses and uses Cyrus even though Cyrus does not acknowledge him. God is not dependent on our belief to accomplish his purposes.

5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me:--The third element, the divine honor, is also extended. In the first paragraph, the point at issue was simply that the Lord is Israel’s god. Now it is his absolute uniqueness, with no competition anywhere.

5b-7, Strengthen Cyrus so that the world may know

Now we enter the third paragraph, Again we have all three points, and again each is amplified beyond what we have seen before.

I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:--The previous two actions dealt with Cyrus’ adversaries and his reputation. Now the Lord claims credit for strengthening Cyrus himself for the battle. Once again, he reminds Cyrus that his special role has nothing to do with his devotion to the

Lord.

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west,--The purpose now reaches its widest extent. Cyrus' conquest is intended to extend the Lord's reputation throughout all the world. And indeed, through Isaiah's prophecy, it has done just that. We Gentiles, today, acknowledge that there is no other God who can predict the future, because we see the prophecy of Isaiah and the historical record concerning Cyrus.

that *there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.*--This aspect of the Lord's honor is repeated from the previous paragraph, with a slight change of order. But he doesn't stop there.

7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.--With two merisms the Lord declares that he is the only ultimate power operative in the universe.

The second merism has caused some offense in suggesting that the Lord is the source of evil, contrary to James 1:13, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." The problem of evil is a deep one, and there are other verses that can help with it, but it's probably not in view here. "Evil" can mean misfortune and disaster, not just moral deviation, and that's likely the sense here, as the contrast shows: the opposite of "evil" is not "righteousness," but "peace." The Lord is the one who brings both prosperity and famine, peace and war. Job used the word to describe his unhappy condition:

Job 2:10 But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive **evil**? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

Amos uses it specifically in relation to the depredations of war:

Amo 3:6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be **evil** in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

Both writers trace disaster to the hand of God.

Though v. 7 is not accusing the Lord of moral evil, most people still are uncomfortable with its implications. We want a God who creates light and peace, but we are offended by one who brings darkness and suffering. Many teachers engage in elaborate theological contortions to avoid the plain sense both of this verse, and of the evidence of history. Some use the fact of suffering in the world as an excuse not to believe in God. "If there really were a loving God, why would we have AIDS, earthquakes, economic crashes, and tsunamis?"

The problem is not with God, but with our over-simplified caricature of him. He does not exist for our comfort, and at the end of the day is free to do with us as he pleases (as vv. 9-10 will emphasize). It would not be right for us as creatures to bring darkness and evil on our fellow-creatures, but God does as he pleases, because (as the previous verse emphasizes), he answers to no one. "I am the Lord, and there is none else."

Each section of ch. 45-48 follows the Cyrus prediction with an account of the Lord's blessings and judgments. In this section, these can be seen as expansions of the light and peace, or darkness and evil, of v. 7.

8 Blessing

v. 7 claimed that the Lord is the source of light and peace. This verse amplifies this claim with a rich metaphor. We consider it carefully, in three successive cycles: the literal event on which it is built, the metaphor in the context of the OT, and the reality as it manifests itself in the NT.

The Literal Event

The Lord frames the promise of blessing using an agricultural metaphor. In real life, the heavens drop rain upon the earth, which opens up so that the plants can sprout forth.

Isa 55:10 the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

In the metaphor, righteousness is the rain, and salvation and righteousness are the fruit that it brings forth from the earth.² The two words for “righteousness” are different. The first one (קִדְּוָה) represents the abstract principle, while the second (הַקְּדוּשָׁה) refers to righteous action (see notes for examples).

The OT Imagery

8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness קִדְּוָה:--God’s righteousness is the cause of all that he does. He acts in accordance with his character and his promises.

When the OT speaks of God’s righteousness קִדְּוָה , it very often associates it with his judgment:

Psa 98:9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: **with righteousness shall he judge** the world, and the people with equity.

Psa 119:75 I know, O LORD, that thy **judgments are right[eousness]**, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Isa 42:21 The LORD is well pleased for his **righteousness'** sake; he will **magnify the law**, and make *it* honourable.

Jer 11:20 But, O LORD of hosts, that **judgest righteous[ness]**, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

Ps 98:9 and the parallel in 96:13 seem particularly appropriate here. The Lord is promising a time when his righteousness will descend to the earth. Ever since ch. 2, Isaiah has been preoccupied with the “day of the Lord,” the coming kingdom. At that time, all wickedness will be punished, and the enemies of his people will be destroyed. There was a glimpse of this judgment in the fall of Babylon, which Rev 18 makes the model for the future judgment of all that sets itself against the Lord.

Like rain upon the dry ground, that judgment will produce a dramatic result.

let the earth open,--The image is of the spring, when the shoots push their way up through the ground. It’s interesting that our word “April” comes from the Latin verb meaning “to open,” referring either to the earth or the buds of the plants, and the modern Greek word for April is ανοιξίς “opening.”

² See Notes for other examples of the use of this metaphor, which may extend our interpretation of “righteousness.”

and let salvation and righteousness be fruitful.--The plural verb (visible in the AV as “let them bring forth”) doesn’t fit with “earth,” and the verb is usually intransitive. We can accommodate the verb best with a slight change of accents, seeing “salvation and righteousness” as the subjects. These are the plants in the garden that the heavens water with God’s righteousness.

The first fruit of God’s righteous judgment is salvation. By destroying Israel’s enemies, the nation will be delivered.

The second fruit is righteousness צדקה, which has the special emphasis of righteous actions. The righteousness of God descending from heaven not only delivers the people from their enemies, but guides them in their own conduct; God’s righteousness leads to human righteousness. This is the point of one of Isaiah’s earliest descriptions of the day of the Lord:

2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

let it [the earth] cause to spring up together.--On this reading, the subject of “spring up” is once again the earth, and “together” refers to the twofold crop of salvation and righteousness.

I the LORD have created³ it.--The Lord claims sole credit for the process outlined in this verse.

The NT Fulfillment

Schematically, the Lord calls for his righteousness to descend in judgment on the earth, producing the fruit of salvation and righteous actions. This vision aligns strikingly with the teaching of the NT. Let’s consider the NT correspondents of the rain and the fruit.

The Rain: The Righteousness of God

We do not see God’s judgment active around us on earth now, but there was a point in history when the righteousness of God was made manifest on earth: at Calvary, when God gathered up our sin into his Son, and then poured out his righteous judgment on him. Perhaps this is part of what Paul means in the first NT reference to the “righteousness of God,”

Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the **righteousness of God** revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The “gospel,” as Paul tells us in 1 Cor 15, is that Christ “died for our sins” and “rose again.” The heart of the gospel is the righteous judgment of God on our sins, in Christ. Calvary reveals “the righteousness of God.”

Our Lord’s work on the cross not only judged our sin, but it also defeated our adversary, the devil, a reflection of the fall of Babylon five centuries earlier:

³ Note the repetition of ברא from v. 7. There, both of its instances were with regard to the negative aspect of God’s work. Its association here with the positive aspect is a nice touch of emphasis on the kind of creation in which the Lord takes pleasure.

Col 2:15 *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, **triumphing over them in it [his cross]**

Rev 12:10-11 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for **the accuser of our brethren is cast down**, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him **by the blood of the Lamb**, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

The Fruit: Salvation and Righteousness

The NT tells us that our **salvation** results from this display of the righteousness of God:

2Pe 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us **through the righteousness of God** and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

That salvation includes deliverance from our adversary. It also includes freedom from the guilt of our own sin. The OT focuses more on salvation as deliverance than forgiveness, but it certainly knows of the problem of sin, and promises that God's righteous judgment will bring deliverance from that as well, as we shall shortly see in Isa 53,

Isa 53:4-6 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

How about the fruit of **righteousness** that springs from the descent of God's righteousness? Like the deliverance, that also has two facets, again both anticipated in the OT.

First, our verse describes righteousness as a fruit, and the NT speaks of the "fruit of righteousness," practical righteousness in our daily lives, as the product of God's loving chastening.

Heb 12:11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable **fruit of righteousness** unto them which are exercised thereby.

Chastening is an aspect of God's righteous judgment:

1Co 11:31-32 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

So this verse is a direct parallel of Isa 45:8.

The New Covenant promises the production of practical righteousness in the redeemed:

Jer 31:33-34 After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Eze 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

But there is another facet to the righteousness that is produced in us by the coming of God's righteousness. In Rom 3-4, Paul teaches that God imputes his own righteousness to us:

3:21-22 But now the **righteousness of God without the law** is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:

4:9, 23-24 ... we say that **faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness**. ... 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was **imputed** to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;

This imputed righteousness is a free gift, the reciprocal of the transfer of our sin to the Messiah:

2Co 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

As Paul argues, this imputed righteousness has its roots in God's dealings with Abraham:

Gen 15:6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness צדקה

It comes to full flower in the title that Jeremiah gives to the Messiah,

Jer 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR **RIGHTEOUSNESS** (צדק)

The Lord is the righteousness that becomes our righteousness.

9-10 Judgment

v. 7 claims that the Lord creates not only light and peace, but also darkness and suffering. Now he amplifies the latter part of this claim, proclaiming two woes on those who rebel against him. Recall from ch. 1-39 how often Isaiah uses "Woe" to declare God's coming judgment on his adversaries. The word is how one expresses lament at a funeral (1 Kgs 13:30; Jer 22:18; 34:5). Those who behave in this way are as good as dead.

These woes are motivated by two metaphors: the Lord as potter, and the Lord as parent.

9, The Pot Striving with the Potter

9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker יצר!--In the previous chapters, God has used several verbs to describe his creative power: create ברא, do עשה, and this one, make or form יצר. In the Genesis account of creation, the first two are very common, but this one appears only three times:

Gen 2:7 And the LORD God **formed** man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Gen 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Gen 2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God **formed** every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them:

In 2:19 as in 2:7, the verb “to form” יצר refers to forming something “out of the ground.”⁴ From the outset, the verb is particularly appropriate to making things from clay.⁵ In fact, the Hebrew word for potter, יוצר, is just the Qal participle of יצר with an orthographically long ‘o’ vowel. Man should remember from the circumstances of his creation that he is just a clod of clay, and his relation to the Lord is that of a pot to the potter.

After Gen 2, the concept of man as a jar appears in Ps 2, unattributed but probably Davidic:⁶

Psa 2:2, 9 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, ... 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces **like a potter's vessel**.

This reference is oblique; God could dash someone like a pot even if he were not considered the potter. The parallel becomes explicit for the first time in Isa 29:16, to which Paul alludes in Rom 9:20, and is often used in Jeremiah.

Isa 29:16 (corrected translation) Surely you turn things upside down. **Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay?** for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

~~Let the a potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth.~~--There is no need to repeat the verb. Man is only a pot, with no more right to question God than any other pot. He should remember not only his origin, but also his fragility. He can easily be dashed to pieces, as Ps 2 should remind the readers.

Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?--For man to challenge God is a direct insult, and only demeans man. If the potter has no hands, the pot must surely be a miserable blob.

10, The Child Dishonoring the Parent

10 Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?--The fifth commandment, the very first one concerning horizontal relations, is, “Honor thy father and thy mother.” It was enforced with strict sanctions:

Exo 21:17 And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

Deu 27:16 Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother.

God deserves at least as much honor from his creatures as a parent does from a child, and the penalty for violating this obligation certainly will merit the declaration, “Woe.”

4 See notes on Gen 2:19. These animals are not the ones created in ch. 1, but specific exemplars so that Adam could name them. God formed them from the clay and showed them to Adam so that he could name them. The cattle, named in vv 24-25, are not mentioned, since they were already with Adam.

5 The verb can be applied to other forms of craftsmanship: in Isa 44:12, it describes the work of a smith with a hammer.

6 Because it appears in the first book of the Psalter, which is mostly Davidic; and because of its theme, relating to the promise of 2 Sam 7.

45:11-48:13, Second Cycle (56 vv)

The general movement in 45-48 is to follow a prophecy of Cyrus with discussion of blessing and judgment. In this cycle, the blessing and judgment are addressed to Israel and Babylon, respectively. Introductory sections highlight the corresponding gentile/Jewish distinction, but these introductory sections offer each group a choice between blessing and judgment.

45:11-13, Creator and Predictor calls Cyrus (3rd person)

This section continues to emphasize God's twin credentials of creative and predictive power that we saw in ch. 42-44.

11 Thus saith the LORD,--The formula marks the start of a new paragraph, as often throughout this section. In this case it forms an inclusion with the same expression at the end of v. 14, setting off this paragraph particularly strongly.

the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker ... my sons,-- "Maker" צור is the same word as in v. 9, referring to the potter, and "sons" recalls the parent metaphor from v. 10, establishing continuity between the last section and this one.

Ask me of things to come,--This is the appropriate action to take toward one's creator: ask him about the future. "Things to come" is the first word in the sentence, giving it prominence. It is folly to strive with one's maker (v. 9); but if the Lord truly is the creator, one can expect him to reveal the future. Such an invitation from him should not be understood as a sarcastic criticism; it is very much in line with what Isaiah invited Ahaa to do back in ch. 7,

7:11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

concerning my sons and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.--This grouping better reflects the Massoretic punctuation, with *zaqeph* on שאלוני, than does the AV's punctuation.

The parallel between "my sons" and "work of my hands" is another keyword link to vv. 9, 10. "Work of my hands" refers to the nation, under the metaphor of the potter and the clay, as in ch. 19,

Isa 19:24-25 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land: 25 Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria **the work of my hands**, and Israel mine inheritance.

How are we to understand the invitation, "Command ye me"?

- Some take it as ironic, as though this section were continuing the rebuke of vv. 9-10: "How dare you ask me about things to come? How dare you command me concerning my sons and my people?"
- I prefer to understand it as sincere, and in contrast with the striving in vv. 9-10. The proper attitude toward God is not to strive with him, but to acknowledge his sovereignty, pay attention to the predictions that he so boldly makes, and ask him to intervene on behalf of his people. "Command ye me" may seem strong, but compare the bold intercession of Moses (Exod 33), Daniel (9:16-19), and Nehemiah (1:4-11).

As he reveals his plans for Cyrus, he is inviting the captives to turn to him and seek his intervention.

12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.--To establish his ability to act, he reminds them of his creative work in Gen 1. We are back to the argument of ch. 40 here. His creative power extends from the earth and its inhabitants to the host of heaven. On the basis of this demonstrated power, he can surely deliver the captives, as he now explains.

13 I have raised him up in righteousness צדק,--God's action is traced to his righteousness. As we have sometimes noted before, righteousness means conformity to a standard, and the only standard to which God is subject is his own word. In raising up Cyrus, he is fulfilling his promise.

and I will direct all his ways:--That is, make them straight, smooth the way before him, as vv. 1-7 have outlined in detail.

he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward,--Here are three very specific predictions, to establish the Lord's predictive power:

- Cyrus will build the city. As we saw in our discussion of 44:28, the reference is to the temple as the foundation, the most important element, of the city.
- He will release the captives and send them home.
- Ancient kings might sometimes buy and sell territories and slaves. Recall how Solomon paid for materials for the temple with 20 cities in Galilee (1 Kings 9:10, 11). Cyrus will restore Jerusalem without any financial incentive.

saith the LORD of hosts.--Not the summary formula נאם יהוה , but the same expression as at the start of v. 13, framing this paragraph and reinforcing its structural integrity.

45:14-25, Subjection of Gentiles

In this panel, the themes of judgment and blessing focus on Babylon and Israel, respectively, in ch. 47-48. They are anticipated with a call to Gentiles here, and then Israel in ch. 46. Each of these calls anticipates both blessing and judgment.

The calling of the Gentiles consists of two panels around a central verse, 18, that sets forth the Lord's claim to be the unique creator. Each panel treats of similar subjects, but with slight variations in order. The first panel **predicts** that the Gentiles will turn to the Lord, while the second **summons** them to abandon their idols and come.

14-17, First Panel

This section is marked off by introductory formulae. One at v. 14 shows that this is a new paragraph, and another at v. 18, starting the next paragraph, shows where it ends.

The internal structure is governed by change of speakers. There are three, each with a distinctive theme that is picked up in the second panel.

- The Lord is introduced in 14a, and his words follow immediately, predicting the coming of the

Gentiles.

- In the course of his words, he introduces the Gentiles who come to pay homage to Israel, and then quotes their words in 14b, 15. They confess that he alone brings salvation, but complain that his revelation has been hidden.
- In v. 16, a new voice comes in. We know it's distinct because it refers in the third person to both the Lord and the Gentiles. The simplest conclusion is that, like the introductory formula in 14a, this is the voice of Isaiah. It sets forth the prospect of salvation for those who turn to the Lord, and shame for those who turn from him to idols.

14a, The Lord Speaks

14a Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying,--Note three features of this verse:

The **people** mentioned are the Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans. Egypt is at the south-east corner of the Mediterranean. Ethiopia is south of Egypt, also on the Nile, in Africa. The Sabeans are a south-Arabian tribe, in the area of modern Yemen, in Arabia, on the other side of the Red Sea from Egypt and Ethiopia. These were powerful civilizations at this time.

Their **strength** is noted, both economic (“labour,” “merchandise”) and physical (“men of stature”). These are not people whom one would subdue easily.

Yet they are **submissive**. Each verb builds on the previous on to emphasize their submission. They come, they follow, they are in chains, they fall down, they make supplication as to a superior.

What a reversal! Israel, formerly captive in Babylon, now receives the abject tribute of formerly proud nations. What is it that brings this expression of submission? Is it Israel's powerful military, or her great learning, or her natural resources? No. In the next verse, they declare the reason for their submission.

14b-15, The Gentiles Speak

14b Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.--They come to her because they recognize that the only true God dwells among her.

The confession of God's uniqueness is a repeated refrain throughout this section. It appears here, at the center of the chiasm in v. 18, and twice in the second panel, at 21 and 22.

15 Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.--It seems most natural to take this as a continuation of the speech of the Gentile suppliants. Having acknowledged that the only God dwells among Israel, they address themselves to him, characterizing him in three ways. Consider these in inverse order.

- “The Savior” is most immediately understood as referring to his deliverance of the nation, in the first instance from Babylon. He is able to overthrow the mighty Babylonian empire and set his people free. In ch. 41:1-7, 21-29, God challenged the pagan gods to predict the future, and

invited the nations to witness the contest:

Isa 41:1 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.

Now they have seen the fulfillment of this audacious promise, and come to acknowledge him.

- This in turn establishes him as the “God of Israel,” particularly committed to this one nation.
- The third characterization is almost a complaint, that this is a God who hides himself. Perhaps this is their excuse for not coming earlier. “We had no idea that you had this special relation with God.” God answers this charge in v. 19 and 48:16. In particular, they have no excuse, because even before the nation went into captivity, his ability to foretell the future ought to have caught their attention.

16-17, Isaiah Comments

16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols.--This verse and the next are Isaiah’s commentary on the oracle of vv. 14-15.

First he comments from the perspective of those who come submissively to Israel. The Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans are idolaters. As the result of the prediction contest of ch. 41 unfolds, they realize the futility of their idols, and seek out the true God.

17 But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.--Unlike them, Israel shall never be humbled. The deliverance that God brings to her will never end. We will encounter this theme again (54:7-10).

18, Center

The central verse is set off by a repetition of the introductory formula. There is an extensive introduction of the Lord as creator in three sections, followed by his brief announcement. These sections emphasize his creative power, his sustaining care, and the purpose of the world.

18 For thus saith the LORD that created ברא the heavens; God himself that formed יצר the earth and made עשה it;--In this section, marked by the participial forms of the verbs, the Lord emphasizes that he alone has brought the world into being: creation *ex nihilo* (“created”), shaping (“formed”) and building (“made”). He claims complete credit for everything that has been done to bring the earth to its present form.

he hath established כון it,--This clause emphasizes that he sustains the world. It is set off from the previous one by the shift from participles to a perfect, and by the use of an explicit subject, “He.” The sense is almost, “He himself has established it.”

he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited:--The final part of the introduction, a bicolon, adds purpose clauses to set forth his purpose for the world. A proper understanding of this bicolon requires us to recognize the relation of the two parts.

The phrase “in vain” in the first half is תהו, translated “without form” in Gen 1:2. By itself, this clause

in Isaiah has been understood by some to be in tension with Gen 1:2, which says that the earth was “without form and void.” If the Lord did not form it “without form,” yet Gen 1:2 finds it “without form,” Gen 1:2 must not be describing the immediate result of creation. The two most common options are either to presume that 1:2 describes the result of a judgment on the earth after the initial creation (the “gap theory,” advocated by the Scofield Bible), or the state of things before the creative work of Gen 1 began, so that Gen 1 would not describe the creation of the planet earth. But both of these are in conflict with Exod 20:11, which appears to bring the initial creation within the scope of the six day

Exo 20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

A solution lies in recognizing the balance in the bicolon. When Isaiah says that the Lord did not create the world תהו, he immediately goes on to say that he shaped it for a purpose, human habitation. The amorphous state in 1:2 was the first stage in the process, but not the ultimate objective of the creation. Yet this does not mean that it was not part of the process. It wasn't ready for habitation until the end of day five. That is, the “formlessness” תהו was not completely gone until that point, but that doesn't mean that the first four days weren't part of the process.

Compare our Lord's healing of the blind man in Mark 8. After the Lord's first touch, the man could only see imperfectly: “I see man as trees, walking” (v. 24). Only after his second touch are we told, “he ... saw every man clearly.”

Another and more profound example is the unfolding of the day of the Lord (often described as “that day”) that we have discussed many times in Isaiah:

The first manifestation is the judgment of the Lord on the northern and southern kingdoms.

Isa 7:18-19 And it shall come to pass **in that day**, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

Then comes the deliverance of Israel from Babylon.

Isa 52:6, 11-12 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know **in that day** that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. ... 11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD. 12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your reward.

Next there is the coming of the Messiah.

Isa 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

The complete fulfillment is yet farther in the future, awaiting the Lord's return and the establishment of his kingdom over all the earth, when

Isa 2:3 for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 12 For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon

every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:

Isa 24:23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

There is an important lesson here: God doesn't immediately realize his ultimate goal, but may bring it about through intermediate steps. We must not be discouraged at the apparent chaos we see around us. He is in control, and he will bring matters to their appropriate end in his own time.

This lesson is embodied in a little poem on my study wall.

My life is but a weaving between my Lord and me.
I cannot choose the colors he worketh steadily.
Ofttimes he weaveth sorrow, and I, in foolish pride,
Forget he sees the upper-, and I, the under-side.

Not until the loom is silent, and the shuttles cease to fly,
Will God unroll the canvas, and explain the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skilful hand
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned (Grant Tuller)

This has been a little digression, to understand the relation of this verse to Gen 1:2. Now let's move back to the context here, where the point is to present the Lord's credentials for his central claim:

I am the LORD; and there is none else.--This emphasis on the creation is to prepare us for the central point: the absolute uniqueness of the Lord. He repeats the refrain that the Gentiles confessed in v. 14b, and that he will pick up again in vv. 21-22. The Gentiles must come to him because there is no one else to whom they can come.

19-25, Second Panel

The elements in this panel correspond to those in the first, but the order is varied. There is a general correspondence to the three speakers in the first panel, but detailed verbal correspondences are skewed: the initial correspondent of the Gentile's confession in 14b-15 is 19, but 20-23 echo portions of that confession before 15a, and 24-25 echo portions of the confession after 15a.

19, Answer to v. 15

The Lord begins by rejecting the accusation brought by the Gentiles in the middle of the first panel. Note the frequent use of verbs for speaking. He communicates with people in a language they can understand. He emphasizes three points: the place of his revelation, its form, and its content.

19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth:--First, he describes the *place* of his revelation. Necromancers or sorcerers would elicit mutterings from the dead, as we saw in 29:4,

29:4 And thou shalt be brought down, *and* shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

In contrast, God's revelation to Israel was open, in a country that lay on the main thoroughfare between

Asia, Africa, and Europe. Any visitor to Jerusalem could have learned it, as the Queen of Sheba did, when she visited Solomon in 1 Kings 10, or the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, who was able to procure a scroll of the sacred text to take with him back home after his visit. God did not speak in a secret place, but put his revelation where many people could encounter it easily.

I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain:--The second point has to do with the *form* of his revelation. The phrase “in vain” is the same expression as in the previous verse, *תהו*, formlessness. His charge to Israel, and ultimately to all men, is not, “Seek me as formlessness.” He does not present himself as a puzzle for us to figure out, an amorphous blob that we have to decipher.

This claim challenges the modern humanistic consensus, which holds that we are the product of random variations, and that if there is a god, we can only know him if we seek him in this chaos. Instead, as he says four times in this verse, he speaks. He uses words. His revelation may be partial, but it is plain. It is a revelation.

I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.--The third point advances from the *location* of the revelation (public) and its *form* (words) to its *content*. Instead of chaos, he offers us words. And his words are not only meaningful, they are right. They conform to his character and to the nature of the world around us. They deserve our attention and our trust.

20-23, Invitation to the Gentiles (cf. 14a)

Having responded to the challenge of the Gentiles from v. 15, the Lord now issues a dual invitation corresponding to the prediction of the coming of the Gentiles in v. 14. The invitation alternates with a motive: there is no other God to whom they can come.

20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations:--Those of the nations who are left after Cyrus’ conquest are invited to draw near to the Lord.

The motive is the Lord’s claim to superiority over the idols because he alone can predict the future.

they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.--They should come to the Lord, because the graven images they worshiped before are powerless to help them.

21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together:--If they have any question, let them bring their idols out of the temples and ask them to figure out what is going to happen.⁷ The Gentiles are invited to assemble their gods for a conference. “Bring near” hints that they cannot come on their own, an important point in ch. 46.

who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.--None of them is able to match the Lord’s ability to predict the future. Here is the third repetition of the uniqueness refrain, from 14b and 18.

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:--Now we come to the second panel, repeating the invitation. All nations are invited to come and enjoy the Lord’s salvation.

⁷ The *Hifil* of *שׁוּב* appears in Isaiah only here and in an earlier prediction challenge, 41:21-22.

for I am God, and there is none else.--Again, the motive is the Lord's uniqueness, as in 14b, 18, and 21. They must come to him, for there is no one else worthy of their worship.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.--This verse is a summary of 20-22, returning from invitation to the predictive mode of v. 14. Everyone will turn to the Lord.

Paul quotes this verse in describing the exaltation of the Lord Jesus in Phil 2.

Phi 2:9-11 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is one of many cases in which OT verses that refer to YHWH are applied directly to the Lord Jesus in the NT, a very strong evidence for our Lord's deity.

24-25, The Moral Choice

The last two verses repeat themes from Isaiah's summary (vv. 16-17): the shame of those who reject the Lord (16), and the salvation promised to those who call on him (17), unfolded into a little chiasm.

24a Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength:--The verbs in 24a are all singular, representing an indefinite individual. Our version renders the first appropriately, but the second as plural. By keeping them together we see the contrast with 24b, which is truly plural.

First, this generic individual confesses that righteousness comes only from the Lord.

even to him shall men he come;--This realization draws this same indefinite individual to the Lord, responding to the invitation in 20-23.

24b and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.--By contrast, and as anticipated in v. 16, shame will be the portion of those (many, Matt 7:13-14) who reject him and rely instead on idols.

25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.--But the Lord will provide salvation for his people.

46:1-13, Israel Called to Hearken

Having called the Gentiles to abandon their idols and trust in him, now he calls Israel. This chapter alternates (ABAB) between mocking idols (and their worshipers) and appealing to Israel (marked by repetition of the appeal to "hearken"). In B2, Israel is seen to be as rebellious as the Gentiles. Just as the Lord offers the Gentiles salvation, so he raises the threat of condemnation to Israel.

1-2, God Mocks the Idols

46:1 Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth,--Bel and Nebo are Babylonian gods.

- Bel, cognate to Hebrew בעל, is really a title rather than name, meaning "master." It is often used in reference to Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon.

- Nebo is the son of Marduk, the god of wisdom and writing. In this capacity, he was the heavenly scribe, keeper of the tablets of destiny, in which each person's life is inscribed.

Though preeminent among the gods of Babylon, they are bowed down and humbled. Why?

their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast.--They are humiliated because they cannot move themselves, but must be carried about by beasts. This notion of who carries whom is the main theme of this chapter.

2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden,--Figuratively, when they try to carry something else, they collapse.

but themselves are gone into captivity.--The Bible often refers to idols being taken captive (Israel's idol calves in Hos 10:5; the gods of Egypt, Jer 43:12; Chemosh in Jer 48:8). When a country is conquered, the idols, adorned with gold and silver, are quickly snatched up as spoil by the victor.

3-5, God Calls Israel

The call is issued to Israel, addressed in the plural, thus individual Israelites, not to the nation as the servant of the Lord.

3 Harken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel,--Recall the emphasis on the Lord's word in v. 19 ("speak," "say," "declare"). God communicates openly, in human language, and the custodians of that word are specifically Israel:

Rom 3:1-2 What advantage then hath the Jew? ... 2 ... chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

Contrast the invitations in ch. 45 and 46. The Gentiles must "come." Israel simply needs to "hearken."

which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb:--The rhetorical effect is clearer if we omit "by me." Of course it is the Lord who sustains all his people, but the point is to remind them first of all of the condition of a small child, that must be carried about after birth.

4 And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you:--Our experience as babes holds a lesson for us as adults. We never become so mature that we can do without the loving attention of a strong parent. Who can give that care to us? The Lord presents himself and says, "I am he." He is really the one who cared for us when we are small, through the parents whom he gave to us. When we become old, and our parents are gone, he is still there to care for us.

Note the contrast with the idols. Idols bow down and have to be carried. Israel is borne up by her God.

I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.--The pronouns are explicit. "It is I who have made. It is I who will bear. It is I who will carry and deliver you." An earthly parent may neglect their child, but the Lord has promised to carry us throughout our life.

Isa 49:15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

5 To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?--Since God carries them, how can they compare him with a god whom they must carry? There is a hint here of

the sinfulness that led to their captivity, a hint that will become more apparent in the second panel.

6-7, God Mocks the Idols and their Worshipers

The focus shifts from the idols to their worshipers, who must manufacture and carry them. He traces two cycles of futile worship, each introduced by “yea” יא.

6 They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god:--The idol is of human origin. Man must assemble the materials and form it.

The next two brief paragraphs each begin with the worshiper’s interaction with the idol, then show the idol’s weakness. Two forms of interaction are anticipated.

they fall down, yea יא, they worship. 7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him,--The first form of interaction is worship. The staccato clauses starts with the peoples’ devotion, then shifts to the need for them to carry him around, a common feature in idol worship.

In the first section mocking the idols, animals carried them around. What does that say about worshipers who feel a need to carry their gods around? They become no better than beasts!

This practice continues to the present day. An important feature of the frequent Shinto festivals (*matsuri*) in Japan is the procession of the *mikoshi* or portable shrine through the streets, as is the procession of statues of the Virgin Mary in many Roman Catholic festivals.

and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove:--Humans may think carrying the idol is an act of devotion, but it really emphasizes the idol’s impotence.

Yea יא, one shall cry unto him,--The second form of interaction with a god is appealing for help.

yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.--But such an appeal is in vain, and can bring no deliverance.

8-13, God Calls Israel

This time, before the appeal to **hearken**, there is an appeal to **remember**. They are to look backward as well as forward. In each appeal, he points out their sinfulness, making precise the hint from v. 5.

8-11, Remember the Past Prophecies

8 Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind,--He directs their attention backward.⁸ His past predictive power and his promise to deliver them should encourage them.

Since ch. 41, the Lord has repeatedly set forth this chain of reasoning:⁹

- He is greater than the idols. Why?
- Because he can predict the future. How can we know this?
- Because he has predicted the past.

8 “Shew yourselves men” is a *hapax*, with multiple suggestions for its meaning, but many of them in one way or another are encouragements, and the clause may lie behind 1Co 16:13, “quit you like men.”

9 See Haran, SVT 9 (1963), p. 137, who references 41:22, 26; 42:9; 43:9, 12; 44:7-8; 45:21; 46:10; 48:3-5, 14-16a.

Here he does it again, grouping the evidence from the past and the claim for the future on either side of the conclusion to which this data lead.

O ye transgressors.--Remarkably, he offers this encouragement to those who have broken his law. Isaiah writes *before* the judgment falls, while the nation is still in idolatry. But in any case, God's promises of deliverance are always offered to transgressors, the only kind of people there are!

9 Remember the former things of old:--The significance of these "former things" is in the evidence they give of God's predictive power.

for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,--Here again is the conclusion that was emphasized repeatedly in the call to the Gentiles, the absolute uniqueness of God.

Now he turns to prophecies of the future. The next two verses are a little chiasm, with references to his word and his purpose surrounding the central promise.

God's Word	10a Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times <i>the things</i> that are not yet done,	11b yea, I have spoken <i>it</i> , I will also bring it to pass;
God's Purpose	10b saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:	11c I have purposed <i>it</i> , I will also do it.
The Promise	11a Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country:	

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not yet done,--Having reminded them of his successful predictions in the past, the Lord now points them to predictions of things that haven't happened yet.

saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:--His verbal declaration (10a) stems from his underlying counsel and pleasure (10b). The only motive for the coming deliverance, and for the promise that he gives of it, is his own decision, founded in nothing more than his good pleasure.

The prophecy itself, as usual, focuses on Cyrus, whom he describes in two ways.

11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east,--Persia lies to the east of Babylon. Cyrus is described first as a bird of prey because he moves so swiftly.¹⁰

the man that executeth my counsel from a far country:--The second description is that Cyrus carries out God's plan, not his own. No doubt he felt that he was in control, but

Pro 21:1 The king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass;--Now we return to the fact that God proclaimed this event before it happened, ...

I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.--...and the rooting of his prophecy in his sovereign purpose.

12-13, Hear the Promise of Salvation

12 Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that *are* far from righteousness:--As he called transgressors to remember (v. 8), so now he invites the unrighteous to hear. As our Lord proclaimed,

¹⁰ Recall 41:3, "he will not come on the way by foot," like the he-goat in Dan 8:5.

Mat 9:13 I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

They are “far from righteousness,” and because they are stout-hearted, stubborn, they will not move toward it. So God promises to bring righteousness to them.

13 I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry:--“Righteousness” here is *יְדִי*, the righteousness that we exhibit rather than God’s righteousness expressed in his revelation and judgment. “Righteousness and salvation” here recall the fruit produced by the rain of God’s righteousness in 45:8,

Isa 45:8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth **salvation**, and let **righteousness** spring up together;

and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.--The recipient of this salvation is Zion. He reminds us once again of the motivation for this deliverance: Israel is his glory. By delivering them he exalts himself.

Eze 36:22 I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake

47:1-15, Judgment on Unworthy Babylon

In 45:14-25 God invited the Gentiles to come to him, and even predicted that they will, but Babylon will not be among them.

This chapter falls into three parts, with a loose correspondence between the outer two.

- 1-5, Declaration of Judgment on Babylon. The Lord describes her coming judgment, and claims responsibility for it.
- 6-11, Indictment of Sin. The Lord outlines the offenses for which this judgment falls.
- 12-15, Failure of Other Helpers. The Lord discredits those on whom she trusts.

There is a loose correspondence between the outer two sections:

- In the first, the Lord orders her to **sit** down in humility, while in the last, he mockingly invites her and her trusted astrologers to **stand** in the face of the judgment (if they can)
- The first emphasizes the power Lord as the judge and deliverer of **Israel**, while the last mocks the weakness of **Babylon’s** alternatives to the Lord.

Throughout this chapter, Babylon is depicted as a woman (vv. 1-3, 5, 7-9). Isaiah has also spoken of Zion in this way (“daughter Zion,” 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22, a phrase that, like so many others, he has apparently taken from David, Ps 9:14), and he will develop this theme even more in the next section of nine chapters (49-57). This imagery persists all the way to the Revelation, where the world’s final drama is described in terms of a contrast between a woman named “Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots” (ch. 17-18) and Jerusalem, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (21:9-10).

1-5, Declaration of Judgment

Note the command to “sit,” and the loss of reputation “thou shalt no more be called,” repeated in vv. 1,

5. These two descriptions of her judgment surround the Lord's claim to be the agent of her destruction, and of Israel's redemption (chart).

1-3a, First Description of Doom

The first description of her doom builds to a crescendo. Three successive imperative sections are amplified with vocatives to the victim and indicative explanations. The explanations are passive; the agent behind this fearful judgment is not yet specified.

47:1 Come down, and sit in the dust,--This is the first imperative. Sitting in the dust is a mark of humility and mourning. That's where Job sat to indicate his repentance:

Job 42:6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

It was the mark of mourning when Jerusalem fell to Babylon:

Lam 2:10 The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

Now God summons Babylon to this place of humiliation.

O virgin daughter of Babylon,--As in 1:8, the genitives here mark apposition. The one addressed is the city of Babylon, who is depicted as a daughter, a delicate virgin. The dustheap is no place for a gentle lady. Why is she here? The next cycle will explain.

sit on the ground:--The second imperative repeats the first, preparing for the explanation:

there is no throne,--Here is why she must sit on the ground, in the dust: because the throne has been taken from her.

O daughter of the Chaldeans:--Now it is the people, not just their city, who are described under the figure of a woman.

for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.--Her life of luxury and comfort is at an end. He now enumerates details of her humiliation.

2 Take the millstones, and grind meal:--Grinding at the mill is the task of slaves:

Exo 11:5 And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill;

uncover thy locks,--Isaiah cites it as a mark of shame for a woman to have her head uncovered. This may anticipate the NT teaching that the head-covering marks a woman's submission to, and thus protection by, her husband (1 Cor 11). Even today, we saw in Jerusalem that the Arabs would treat young women with covered heads respectfully, while an uncovered woman was considered fair game. A slave woman would have no such protection.

make bare the leg,--The word appears only here; cognates suggest that it may mean "flowing robe," which would go along with the previous clause. She is being forced to lay aside her noble garments.

uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.--The reference is probably to exposing her legs as she works among the irrigation ditches that criss-cross the land around Babylon. This feature of the land, attested

by ancient engineering maps, impressed the captives from Judah:

Psa 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

There was a time when Babylon forced others, including the Israelites, to operate the irrigation system. Now those who were the masters must themselves labor in the ditches.

The exposure of her thigh, initiated because of her servile work, has natural consequences:

3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered--Before this passage, this expression appears once in a literal sense in Exod 20:26 (the priest is not to go up steps to the altar, so as not to expose his nakedness), but then only in Lev 18 and 20 (21 times), where it is a euphemism for shameful sexual relations. A female slave has no protection from the lust of her master.

yea, thy shame shall be seen--Raped and abandoned, she will be disgraced openly, having lost all respect and nobility.

It is interesting that modern fashions encourage women to adopt modes of dress that lead naturally to their disgrace and dishonor.

The idiom of a woman degraded and shamed in the course of war is unfortunately a common one in our modern age. This prophecy shows that it is an ancient characteristic of strife. But note the passives, leaving unspecified the one who brings this on her. Surely, Isaiah must have in mind the troops of Cyrus, ravaging the countryside.

3b-4, The Lord, the Agent of Doom and Redemption

I will take vengeance--Babylon's coming disgrace is not just an unfortunate consequence of Cyrus' attack. The Lord claims credit for it as his vengeance on a nation that has sinned against him. We may be shocked that he is associated with such a degrading event, but this is because we do not adequately appreciate the seriousness of human sin or the fierceness of God's wrath against it.

Isa 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

and I will not meet ~~thee~~ as a man--The phrase is difficult, but one meaning that fits the context is, "I will not encounter anyone." I will proceed unopposed. Nobody will stand against me.

4 As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel--Note the shift in speaker. As Isaiah hears the Lord describe his terrible vengeance, he reminds himself and the nation, "This God is our Lord. He is the one who redeems us." Too often in modern Christianity, the wrath and judgment of God are felt to be incompatible with his love and salvation. But the effectiveness of his vengeance against his enemies is exactly why we can be confident that he will deliver us.

5, Second Description of Doom

In the first description of doom, we saw three elements in various combinations: a command, a vocative addressed to Babylon, and an explanation. The second description has all three.

5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness--The first doom was to servitude and humility. The

second is to obscurity. The voice of Babylon once rang across the known world. Her armies were seen everywhere. Now she is silent and invisible.

O daughter of the Chaldeans:--Again, the nation is pictured as a vulnerable young woman.

for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.--Once, she was mistress over many nations. Kings brought her tribute. Now she is nothing.

6-11, Indictment of Sin

The previous paragraph described God's coming doom on Babylon. Now we learn its reason.

6, *Babylon's Action*

Babylon is condemned for her attitude in executing God's judgment on his people.

6 I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand:--Babylon had power over Israel only because God was chastising them.

thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.--Yet Babylon showed no awareness of their special standing. God is free to pollute his inheritance, but woe unto anyone else who does so.

What was Babylon's attitude as God wielded her? She was not humbled by her responsibility, or the holiness of the people whom God was using her to chastise. The rest of the paragraph alternates (chart) between her proud self-confidence and the judgment that will fall on her. The self-confidence sections are marked by her own statements ("thou saidest," "thou sayest," "thou hast said"), in particular her sense of uniqueness. The judgments grow from two in the first panel to three in the second.

7-8, *Babylon's Attitude (A)*

7 And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever:--She thought of herself as a noble lady, not as a servant of the Lord. She thought she was in control of the process.

so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart,-- She did not contemplate the awesome responsibility of being an instrument of judgment on God's chosen people. She ought to have said, "How can I dare to touch God's chosen people? I must proceed in deep humility, calling on the Lord."

neither didst remember the latter end of it.--In particular, she did not think of what the outcome might be. In spite of the judgment that he brings on them, God calls his people the apple, or pupil, of his eye (Deut 32:10). Anyone who touches them directly offends him. Babylon ought to have contemplated the consequences of her actions.

8 Therefore hear now this,--The Lord now responds to her. He first characterizes her in four ways:

thou that art given to pleasures,--First, her life was driven by the pursuit of comfort and pleasure. This is a searching indictment for us who live in the bounty of modern America. Yet the solution is not to seek poverty for its own sake. Paul makes clear the responsibility of a believer to "provide ... for his own, and specially for those of his own house" (1 Tim 5:8). The issue is where we put our trust.

1Ti 6:17-19 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, **nor trust in uncertain riches**, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

that dwellest carelessly,--Her second characteristic is a false sense of security. "Carelessly" is used in the archaic sense of "without worry." The Hebrew word means "securely." Babylon was confident of her invincibility.

that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me;--Third, she claims to herself divine prerogatives. Her boast contradicts the Lord's claim,

Isa 45:6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that **there is none beside me**. I am the LORD, and there is none else.

Isa 46:9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and **there is none like me**,

This is the heart of human sin: challenging God's place, making oneself a god. I have been preoccupied lately with characteristics of God that we think of as sinful in people: irresponsibility, pride, arrogance, anger. The reason they are sinful is that they amount to claims to deity!

I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:--Fourth, she is confident of her dominion over other nations. To see this we need to unpack the continuing metaphor, which compares the city to a woman. What does it mean for a city to be widowed, or to lose her children?

Let's start with the children. English readers of the Bible are probably unaware that Josh 17:11 mentions children:

And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher Bethshean and her **towns**, and Ibleam and her **towns**, and the inhabitants of Dor and her **towns**, and the inhabitants of Endor and her **towns**, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her **towns**, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her **towns**...

The word translated "towns" is literally "daughters." A walled city was the nucleus around which a number of smaller, unfortified hamlets would spring up. They were dependent on the city for their defense, and would come under its rule. Babylon, as a mighty empire, had many "children," not only small towns in Mesopotamia, but subject nations across the ancient world.

Now consider the word for "widow" אַלְמָנָה. The English word refers simply to a woman whose husband has died. This alone is not enough to make a woman a widow in Hebrew. She must also be without any means of support, and thus in need of special legal protection (like the stranger and the fatherless).¹¹ Naomi, who has a daughter-in-law and a plot of ground that belonged to her husband, is never called a widow. But it is applied to Tamar after the death of Onan (Gen 38:11), when Jacob cast sent her back to her father's house, thus depriving her of the support that came through her marriage. She is no longer a wife, the mistress of a household, but has returned to being a daughter in her father's house. For a city to become a widow is to cease being the center of a state, and itself to become tributary, once more a "child" of some other power. Lam 1:1 makes the metaphor explicit:

11 C. Cohen, "The 'Widowed' City," JANES 5 (1973) 75-81.

Lam 1:1 How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!

So the meaning of Babylon's metaphorical claim is that her place as mistress of the world is secure. Those nations and cities that are tributary to her will never depart (loss of children). She herself will never become tributary to another power (widowhood).

9, Twofold Judgment (A)

8 Therefore hear now this,--The two attitude sections are marked by a fourfold reference to what Babylon says. Now the Lord interrupts. "Stop talking and start listening to me."

The Lord emphasizes both the nature of the judgment and its intensity.

9 But these two things shall come to thee ... the loss of children, and widowhood: ...--She will lose control over the states that are tributary to her, and she herself shall become the subject of another power.

9 ... in a moment in one day, ... they shall come upon thee in their perfection—This disaster will be both sudden and complete.

for in the multitude of thy sorceries, and for in the great abundance of thine enchantments.--We know from Daniel that Babylon was given over to the occult. Our version takes this as an additional reason for the judgment. But throughout this section of the book, false gods are seen, not as a sin to be punished, but as a folly to be exposed. We'll see in a moment (vv. 12-15) that the present section views the sorcerers and soothsayers in the same light. It's most natural¹² to understand these phrases in the same way. Her skill in the black arts can do nothing to save her from the hand of the true God.

10, Babylon's Attitude (B)

As in the first panel, Babylon is talking again. Note the alternation (chart), highlighting Babylon's sin and her exalted sense of being above everyone else. This verse is a perfect vignette of attitudes in modern Ann Arbor.

10 For thou hast trusted in [the midst of] thy wickedness:--The idea is not that wickedness was the object of her trust. That attitude is unparalleled in the Bible. Rather, she had an attitude of trust and confidence while persisting in her wickedness.¹³ The wicked squelch any stirrings of trouble in their souls, "having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim 4:2). They encourage one another with encouragements to "look on the bright side," or even to trust in God, with no thought to whether they have offended him. The truth of the matter is that "there is no peace to the wicked" (Isa 48:22; 57:21). We do people no service if we offer them comfort apart from the forgiveness of their sin.

thou hast said, None seeth me.--The reason she can be confident in the midst of her sin is that she does not acknowledge any power who sees her and holds her accountable. Such gods as she acknowledges either do not know of her sin, or else don't care about it.

12 And consistent with the use of the preposition כ, which AV translates "for" but which is most simply rendered "in"

13 See HALOT for examples of the absolute use of כ, including 12:2.

Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee;--The human mind is a wonderful gift from God, but its self-reflective capabilities can lead us astray if we do not subject it to the creator. Paul speaks of “the desires of .. the mind” as part of being “by nature the children of wrath,” Eph 2:3. The parallel with the first half of the verse suggests that we focus on its rationalizing capabilities, its ability to excuse our sin based on mitigating circumstances.

and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.--She repeats the godlike claim from the first attitude section (v. 8). She thinks that the power of human reason makes her the supreme creature in the universe, answerable to no one. We think of this as a modern attitude, but in fact Isaiah shows that it goes back to ancient times.

11, Threefold Judgment (B)

The first judgment section faced her with two dooms, widowhood and the loss of children. This section announces three: evil, mischief, and desolation. In each case the Lord points out their impotence, in terms that grow more and more ominous (chart).

11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth:--The word for “evil” is the generic term רעה, for which the Lord takes credit in 45:7, “I make peace, and create evil.” Here, as there, it describes “disaster.”

Their impotence is in their inability to discern its origin (literally, “its dawn”).¹⁴ Like the wind, they cannot tell where it comes from (John 3:8). Ironically, if they had heeded Isaiah’s prophecies, they would know its source, and understand what to do about it.

and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off:--The word for mischief appears in the Bible for the first time in Isaiah, and appears to mean a collapse, which goes nicely with the verb “fall.” Their world will fall down around them.

Their impotence extends now beyond ignorance of its origin, to inability to do anything about it once it has arrived. We may not understand why it rains on a given day, but we know how to go indoors or put up an umbrella. But they will find themselves without any recourse.

and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.--This word for disaster describes a storm that sweeps in without warning.

Now their impotence is expressed in the most general terms possible. They don’t know the origin of the disaster. They don’t know its remedy. They simply don’t know. In today’s jargon, they are clueless, utterly confused and adrift.

An Echo of Assyria

This judgment on Babylon is strikingly like something we read earlier about Assyria.

Isa 10:5-7, 12 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.
6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give

¹⁴ Modern scholars derive שחרה from a root meaning divination, thus “you will not know how to charm it away,” in parallel with the second panel. But the three panels are not parallel, as the contrast between the second and third clearly shows. The derivation from “dawn” is straightforward, and yields a nice progression of despair across the three panels.

him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. ... 12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

There are two lessons for us to recognize in the experience of Assyria and Babylon.

The first is doctrinal. It is a remarkable characteristic of God's providence that he can use human wickedness to accomplish his purposes, without either being tainted by that wickedness or relieving the human instrument of its responsibility. This is a deep enigma, one that Paul faces in Rom 9.

Rom 9:17-20 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. ... 19 Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? 20 Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?

The fact that someone advances God's ends does not make him righteous. God causes the wrath of men to praise him (Ps 76:10), but for all that it is still wrath, which does not produce God's righteousness in us (James 1:20).

To this doctrinal lesson, we must add a practical one. There is a warning here for us in our dealings with other believers. As we become more spiritual, we bear an increasing responsibility for helping younger believers with problems of sin in their lives:

Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

The "spirit of meekness" that Paul enjoins is just what Babylon lacked. We will sometimes be the instruments through which God delivers reproof and rebuke to his sinning people, but we must do so with great caution and meekness, lest we fall into the condemnation of Babylon and Assyria before her. God's people, however immature they may be and whatever chastisement he may send upon him, are the object of his special love, and anyone who abuses them must answer to him.

12-15, Failure of Other Helpers

Twice the Lord sarcastically invites Babylon to invoke her chosen defenders. Each time he proclaims the futility of the effort.

12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries,--She relied on the occult, as we can see in the description of court officials in Daniel ("magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, soothsayers, sorcerers," 2:2; 4:7; 5:11, along with "wise men," 2:27).

wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth;--Her relation to them is described as "laboring." The verb emphasizes the weariness of laboring, and is used negatively in 40:28, 31 to describe the true God and his worshipers:

Isa 40:28 the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither **is weary?**

Isa 40:31 But 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.

This contrast reminds us of the related contrast in ch. 46, between gods that need to be carried by their worshipers, and the Lord, who carries his people.

if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.--The sarcasm is stronger than our version reflects. "If so be" אולי is literally "perhaps." The tone is that of Elijah on Mt Carmel.

1Ki 18:27 Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or **peradventure** אולי he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

God is daring them to try to withstand his judgment in their own way. "Go ahead. Call on your own resources. Maybe they'll be able to help you."

13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels.--A declaration of futility concludes the first invitation. "You've tried hard to make all those things work, but you've only worn yourself out."

Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee.--Here is the second invitation. If they're so powerful, let them deliver you from what is coming.

14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.*--Again, the sarcastic invitation is followed by a declaration of the futility of these aids.

Their doom by fire reminds us of the parody of ch. 44,

Isa 44:15-17 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

If people can't see the impotence of an idol from the use of the same wood for fuel, the Lord will rub their nose in it by burning up their idols.

15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured,--Again, we are reminded of the exhausting toll that false gods bring upon people.

even thy merchants, from thy youth:--It's striking, in a passage describing the futility of trusting in the occult, to find a reference to merchants, and some emend the text to retrieve another word for sorcerers. But the text as it stands is searing sarcasm. Two characteristics of merchants come to mind.

First, their purpose is commerce. It doesn't matter to a merchant whether he sells bread or bobby pins, as long as he sells. These supposed holy men, these savants with deep knowledge of hidden things, are nothing but merchants, selling a commodity for the sake of personal gain. Babylon's transactions with them have not really been about knowledge. They've been about a con game, transferring wealth from the gullible rulers to the clever purveyors of wisdom.

Second, merchants in the ancient world were often itinerant, peddlers, and the Hebrew word comes from a root meaning “to go around, to circulate.” They aren’t truly of your own people. If you want occult knowledge, there’s a certain attractiveness to getting it from someone foreign. Consider the appeal of Indian gurus in the 1960’s, or of Daniel’s easy acceptance into the wise men of Babylon. These people have no vested interest in your well-being. They come to town, sell while the market is good, and then move on.

they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.--When the fortunetellers find that they cannot solve the problem, they quietly wander off, so that their angry customers don’t come demanding their money back.

48:1-13, Blessing on Unworthy Israel

As we have seen (chart), this panel of 45-48 contains two references each to Israel and the Gentiles. The Gentiles are invited to come (45:14-25), yet gentile Babylon is doomed (ch. 47).

What can Israel expect? She was described in her first reference as a transgressor (46:8) and stouthearted (46:12), an indictment that is continued in vv. 1, 4, and 8 of this chapter. Surely she must be judged, but in fact God promises to deliver her (vv. 9-11)! The world thinks that God will destroy the wicked and deliver the righteous, but in fact we are all wicked. None of us deserves his salvation, but he graciously does save some, in spite of their wickedness! The central message of this chapter is that God’s salvation comes solely because of his grace, in order to glorify his name.

This section begins, like the following, with a plural address to Israel, but quickly shifts (v. 3) to the singular, personifying her as the previous chapter personified Babylon.

As often, the section has AB-C-AB symmetry (chart). The outer sections call Israel to hearken (first noting how they call on the Lord falsely, then commenting on his call of them) and remind them of his credentials as the only God. At the center, he announces his gracious salvation, not for their merit, but for the sake of his name. The chiasm focuses our attention on vv. 9-11, which is the central theme of the chapter.

God’s credentials are the same ones we discovered earlier (chart): his ability to predict the future (ch. 41-42), and his role as creator (40:12-31).

1-2, Command to the False Callers to Hear

The nation is summoned using plural verbs and pronouns, emphasizing the individual responsibility (and failure!) of each Israelite.

This section is noteworthy for its emphasis on the nation’s responsibility to hear (chart). The verb שמע “to hear” accounts for more than 3% of the words in this chapter.¹⁵ Recall the contrast that we saw between the invitations to the Gentiles (ch. 45) and the Israelites (46): the Gentiles were called to “come” (45:14, 20, 24), but Israel had only to “hear” (46:3), because she already possessed God’s revelation.

In these two verses, he addresses the nation in the plural, emphasizing the individual responsibility of

¹⁵ 11 in all (out of 106 in the entire book); the next highest chapter, 37, has 1.56%, and the next after that, 6, has 1.48%

each person. He characterizes them in three ways: their geneological origin, their spiritual affiliation, and their trust.

48:1 Hear ye this [pl], O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah,--Genealogically, they are descendants of the patriarchs. "Jacob" and "Israel" refer to the entire nation. "Judah" focuses on the southern kingdom, the portion that was taken captive to Babylon, to whom Isaiah is primarily speaking.

which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel,--Spiritually, they claim the Lord as their God.

To understand the significance of this statement, we need to recall that the Bible considers taking an oath in the name of a deity as a form of allegiance to that deity:

Deu 6:13-14 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt **swear by his name**.
14 Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;

Jos 23:7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, **nor cause to swear by them**, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

but not in truth, nor in righteousness.--By swearing in his name they claim to worship the Lord, but in fact they are not subject to his law. This is the heart of violating the third commandment:

Exo 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

We "take the name of the Lord" when we identify ourselves with him. We take his name "in vain" when our lives are inconsistent with our self-identification with him.

2 For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is his name.--Psychologically, they think of themselves as citizens of Zion, and claim to trust in the Lord.

3-8, God's Credentials: Prediction

Now he shifts to singular, which focuses on the nation as a corporate unit, the Servant of the Lord. In this and the corresponding (12b-13) sections, God is repeating his credentials. Here, it is the credential of prediction.

As often, this credential involves two parts. First, he recalls the "former things," previous prophecies in Israel's history that have already been fulfilled, which they have already heard. Then he turns to "new things" that they have not yet heard. In both cases, he motivates his predictive activity by their propensity to sin (chart).

In between the two, in v. 6b, the pronouns briefly shift to plural before returning to singular again. This curious feature calls our attention to the division between the two kinds of prediction, and offers an interesting rhetorical twist, as we shall see.

3-6a, Predictions of the Former Things

3 I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed (שמע Hifil, “announced,” “caused to be heard”) them;--As we have seen before (41:22; 42:9), the “former things” are previous events in Israel's history. With three separate clauses God claims to have announced them beforehand.

All three verbs reflect the agency of his word: “declare, mouth, cause to hear.” Prediction, like creation, demonstrates the authority of God's word. We naturally recognize prediction as verbal, but recall from Gen 1 that God's word was also his mechanism for forming the world.

I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass.--The next two verbs focus on God's execution of what he promised would happen. He not only predicts, but he is the causal agent who brings it to pass. In fact, he can predict precisely because he has the power to make it happen.

Past instances of fulfilled prophecy stand in Israel's history as monuments to the Lord's sovereign power.

Now he motivates this evidence. Why has he been so careful to provide past examples of fulfilled prophecy?

4 Because I knew that *thou art* obstinate,--This is a general statement. The word means, literally, “hard,” someone who is resistant to influence. It's amplified with the following two metaphors:

and *thy neck is an iron sinew,*--To direct someone, you have to get them to face in a different direction. A “stiff neck” will not turn. Israel is like a man with iron sinews in the neck. You couldn't turn his direction with a pipe wrench!

and *thy brow brass;*--One often displays emotion on the brow, or forehead. If someone is paying attention to a rebuke, they will wrinkle up their brow or show a worried look. A brow of brass is completely unresponsive to correction.

Jer 3:3 thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.

5 I have even from the beginning declared *it* to *thee*; before it came to pass I shewed *it* *thee*:--Because of Israel's stubbornness, the Lord took special steps to provide irrefutable evidence of his sovereign power. He declared their history in advance, before it occurred.

lest *thou shouldst say*, Mine *idol* hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.--He did this to show that he, not some other power, was responsible for the events they have experienced. The functionaries of a false god might claim credit after the event, but only God can predict it in advance.

One specific example of this is the exodus from Egypt. God foretold it to Abraham three generations before the nation ever entered Egypt, and centuries before the exodus itself:

Gen 15:13-14 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

In due time, the Lord fulfilled all this:

Exo 12:35-37 And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: 36 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them *such things as they required*. And they spoiled the Egyptians. 37 And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot *that were* men, beside children.

After the fact, when Aaron made the golden calf, the people ascribed to this false god the miracle of the exodus:

Exo 32:3-4 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which *were* in their ears, and brought *them* unto Aaron. 4 And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

But the calf had not predicted the exodus in advance. The error of the people's idolatry is betrayed by the prior promise by God that he would bring them out.

6 Thou hast heard, see all this;--These many instances of fulfilled prophecies, the "former things," are in the past. Therefore Israel has no excuse. She has witnessed over and over God's ability to predict the future.

6b, Appeal to Witnesses

and [you,] will not ye declare it?--This use of the plural second person is completely anomalous in vv. 3-13, which otherwise use exclusively the singular. The structure sets it off at the center of a chiasm, suggesting that it is an appeal to bystanders (or perhaps to the nations, 41:1, or even to the heavens and earth, 1:2) to bear witness to the truth of his predictive claims. Having presented the evidence of his predictive power to Israel, the Lord turns to the bystanders in mock frustration and asks them, "What's not clear about this? Why don't my people get it? Would you please tell them what's going on?"

6c-8, Predictions of the New Things

Now he turns from "former things" to "new things," predictions of things yet to come.

I have shewed thee new things from this time,--These are "new things," recent predictions yet to be fulfilled.

even hidden things,--Their realization is still shut up. It has not blossomed forth.

and thou didst not know them.--Israel cannot claim that they thought of these things. They had no inkling of them.

7 They are created now, and not from the beginning;--They haven't been around for you to discover on your own. These prophecies are of new, unanticipated things.

even before the day when thou heardest them not;--The Hebrew is obscure. The AV is quite a literal translation, but the meaning is not clear. One possibility, which is parallel with the previous line, is, "Before today thou heardest them not."

lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.--They neither knew these things in advance, nor heard

them. That prior ignorance is a deliberate part of God's plan. He wants to force them to recognize that these new prophecies are from him, not something that human intelligence could anticipate.

8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, ~~from that time that~~ formerly thine ear was not opened:--Contrast the confirmation of Israel's culpability with regard to the former things, in v. 6. There, she is accountable because she **has** heard and seen the evidence of God's past sovereign work. Here, she is accountable because she was **not** able to anticipate beforehand the new things that God is bringing to pass.

for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.--God is motivated to provide these credentials because of the people's rebelliousness. They would not simply accept his word, so he must provide proof.

9-11, Salvation for God's Sake

Having presented the first element of his credentials, the Lord now describes his gracious provision of salvation. As we have seen before, the motive is not Israel's worthiness, but his own glory.

As often in Isaiah, this section has an ABA structure (chart). Emphases on God's motive surround the statement of what he has done with the nation.

9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.--God's salvation has three characteristics:

- The **risk** from which we are saved is God's judgment: "that I cut thee ... off." The verb (Hifil of כרת) means "exterminate, wipe out." People often call on God to save them from their weakness, or from personal misfortune. Most of all, they need him to save them from himself. He is the one who threatens us, because of our sin. The default, in the absence of salvation, would be our complete destruction.
- The **means** by which we are saved is a change in God's attitude: "I will defer mine anger ... I will refrain." In the natural course of affairs, God's anger rises against us. He deliberately chooses to restrain it.
- The **motive** for his restraint is his own reputation: "for my name's sake ... for my praise." He doesn't do this to make us comfortable, but to enhance his own reputation. The two purposes point in opposite directions:
 - "for my praise" looks forward to the grateful worship brought by those who have experienced his salvation.
 - "for my name's sake" recalls his past promises to the patriarchs. If he were to destroy the nation, his reputation would be slandered.
 - Moses uses this argument that Moses with God, at the episode of the golden calf (Exo 32:12-13): "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, 'For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?' ... 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven,

and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit *it* for ever.”

- He repeats it when the spies bring back an evil report, and the Lord again threatens to destroy them (Num 14:13-16): “And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear *it*, ... 15 Now *if* thou shalt kill *all* this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, 16 “Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.”
- Joshua uses it after Ai, using language similar to this (Jos 7:8-9): “O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! 9 For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear *of it*, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and **what wilt thou do unto thy great name?**”
 - Importantly, the focus is all on his motives, not on us.

In the center of this chiasm, he acknowledges the suffering that they have endured:

10 Behold, I have refined thee,--The Lord continues a metaphor introduced in ch. 1. There, Isaiah describes the nation’s sin using the figure of impure metal:

1:22 Thy silver is become dross,

Three verses later, he promises to use a refining process to remove the impurities:

1:25 I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

Now he explains the suffering they have endured as this promised process of refinement. In this context, we should recall Ross’s study on James 1. Suffering is a tool that God uses to produce perfection in our lives.

but not with [for] silver;--The qualification, “but not with silver,” admits several possible explanations. One common meaning of the Hebrew phrase בכסף is “for money,” and that makes good sense here. No one paid God to purify them. It’s fashionable today to hire a personal trainer to put us through our paces and whip us into shape. But this purification wasn’t Israel’s idea, or supported by her in any way. It is all of grace.

The next verse parallels the previous one, reversing the roles of the verb and adverbial phrase.

I have chosen thee—This verb recalls the adverbial phrase, “not with silver.” They did not choose him, or hire him to be their savior. He chose them as his people.

in the furnace of affliction.--Corresponding to the verb “refined” in the first half of the verse is this adverbial phrase. The Lord is recalling Moses’ words,

Deu 4:20 But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth **out of the iron furnace**, *even* out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as *ye are* this day.

Solomon (1 Kings 8:51) and Jeremiah (11:4) also call Egypt the “iron furnace.” It was from affliction that God originally took the nation to be his distinctive people, and now those in Babylon can expect him to deliver them from their affliction.

v. 11 recapitulates v. 9.

11 For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it:--God saves because he chooses to save, and not for any other reason.

for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.--The 3ms passive “be polluted” requires a subject, and the translators, perhaps noting the echo of “praise” from v. 9, naturally supply “my name,” also from that verse. God’s great concern is for his reputation.

12a Command to the Truly Called to Hear

12 Harken unto me [sg], O Jacob and Israel, my called;--As God prepares to present his credentials for the second time, once again he summons the nation to hear (chart).¹⁶

In the parallel element (48:1-2), they called themselves citizens of Zion, but their profession was “not in truth, nor in righteousness.” This time, by contrast, he calls them “my called.” It makes all the difference who is doing the calling. The distinction reminds us of our Savior’s words to his disciples,

Joh 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you

Or his rebuke to those at the last judgment,

Mat 7:21-23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

True salvation is not something that we control. It is a gift of God.

12b-13, God’s Credentials: Creation

The expressions and ideas in this section remind us of themes that we have seen throughout ch. 40-48, and are appropriate as we near the conclusion of this section. They are arranged in inverse order to that in which we saw them earlier in the section (chart):

- 12b echoes 41-48
- 13 echoes 40.

In the NT, John’s writings apply all of the themes in this paragraph to the Lord Jesus, a striking claim for his deity.

I am he;--This is the fifth and last occurrence of this expression in Isaiah.¹⁷ The first was in 41:4.

16 An alternative analysis of this section is as a ריב, the covenant lawsuit: J. Harvey, *Le Plaidoyer Prophétique ...*, Studia 22, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967, pp. 59-61, which sees the reference to creation as summoning the cosmic witnesses.

17 The absolute expression appears in Isa only in 41:4, 43:10, 13; 46:4; and 48:12. In three other cases (43:25; 51:12; 52:6) it takes a participle as a predicate nominative, “I am the one who” The absolute expression always uses the pronoun אני, while two of the longer constructions (43:25; 51:12) use אנכי .

Isaiah 45-48

The only other instance of the phrase in the OT is in Deuteronomy:

Deu 32:37-39 And he shall say, Where *are* their gods, *their* rock in whom they trusted, ... 39 See now that I, *even I, am he*, and *there is* no god with me....

This whole section, ch. 40-48, is amplifying the Lord's point in Deut 32:39, "there is no other god."

The LXX consistently translates אֲנִי הוּא with the Greek expression εγω εμου "I am." This is the title that the Lord Jesus takes to himself 24 times throughout the fourth gospel. The first instance is his claim to the woman at the well,

4:26 Jesus saith unto her, **I am** that speak unto thee.

To the Pharisees in John 8, he warns,

8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that **I am**, ye shall die in your sins.

And in the garden, at his arrest, he charges his captors,

18:8 I have told you that **I am**: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way:

Note the context in Isaiah from which our Lord draws this title. It is part of YHWH's claim to be the only God, supreme above all idols. When our Lord uses it, he is applying that claim to himself.

I am the first, I also am the last.--Because the Lord is the only God, he must come before everything else, and he will be there when everything else has disappeared.

Like "I am he," this language is distinctive to Isa 40-48. Sometimes it is joined with "I am he":

Isa 41:4 Who hath wrought and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? **I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.**

Isa 43:10 Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: **before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.**

Isa 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; **I am the first, and I am the last;** and beside me *there is* no God.

Again, the language that God applies to himself, the NT applies to our Lord. The Lord of the OT came before all other gods, but he did not come before Jesus:

Joh 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God.

In the Revelation, the glorified Lord Jesus takes Isaiah's language to himself:¹⁸

Rev 1:17, 18 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am **the first and the last**: 18 I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Rev 2:8 unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith **the first and the last**,

¹⁸ The Revelation is *not* quoting the LXX; the LXX in each case paraphrases the term, "the last," but the Lord translates it directly from the Hebrew, using εσχατος, the standard Greek equivalent for אחרון.

which was dead, and is alive;

The one who predicts the future, who delivers Israel from her bondage, and stands above every one who claims to be God, is the one who “was dead and is alive,” the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we move to v. 13, the echos move farther back, to ch. 40. If God is before all things, then we must recognize that all things originate with him.

13 Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth,--This is a common theme in the wisdom literature:

Job 38:4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?

Psa 89:11 The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine: *as for* the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

Psa 102:25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.

Pro 3:19 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens.

In 40:21, Isaiah draws on this literature in presenting the Lord as the creator:

40:21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood **from the foundations of the earth?**

Here, once more he presents himself as the one who founded the earth.

and my right hand hath spanned the heavens:--The “span” is a unit of measure, from the tip of the little finger to the tip of the thumb when the hand is extended. The Lord describes himself as measuring out heaven with his fingers, a theme he introduced in ch. 40:

40:12 Who hath ... **meted out heaven with the span,** ...?

when I call unto them, they stand up together.--Not only has he made them, but he can command their behavior. Once again, the image recalls ch. 40:

40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: **he calleth them all by names** by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one faileth.

Here again, the fourth gospel makes the same claims for our Lord Jesus. “

Joh 1:1, 3, 10 In the beginning was the Word, ... 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him ...

48:14-22, Third Cycle (9vv)

Isa 40-48 ends three panels emphasizing the coming of Cyrus and God’s blessing and judgment on his creatures. We now turn to the concluding panel.

14-16 God Called Cyrus (3rd person)

This section is an alternation, marked off by the shift from imperative to indicative. The indicative portion of the first panel describes the sending of Cyrus from two different perspectives, while the second merges these two perspectives in a way that prepares us for the emphasis of the next eight chapters on the Servant of the Lord.

14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear;--At the end of the last panel, Israel was commanded to hear, but now everybody is summoned.

which among them hath declared these things?--Here is the prediction challenge that we have seen repeatedly throughout this section (41:22; 43:9; 44:7; 45:21). Gather the nations and their gods together. Who among them can predict the future?

Now, in the indicative, we turn to the prediction itself, the sending of Cyrus. It is stated twice, but in a confusing way. Who is doing the sending?

The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.--Here the Lord, described in the third person, is sending Cyrus. This is certainly consistent with what we have seen throughout ch. 45-48. But the next verse is puzzling:

15 I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.--Another voice breaks in, claiming to be the one who sends Cyrus. Who is this?

Certainly no creature would dare to claim to share the Lord's authority and power in sending Cyrus. This must be the voice of the Lord. We are shifting from the voice of Isaiah in 14b to the Lord himself. But when we get to the second half of the alternation, we'll see that something more is going on.

16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this;--Like 14a, 16a calls witnesses to come and hear.

I have not spoken in secret from the beginning;--This clause is another answer to the petulant accusation of the Gentiles in 45:15,

Verily thou *art* a God that hidest thyself

The first answer was in 45:19,

I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

Again the voice of YHWH removes all excuse from those who oppose him. His revelation has not been hidden or obscure. So the "I" here must be the same as in 15, the Lord who claims to have sent Cyrus.

from the time that it was, there am I:--Both phrases in this clause are interesting.

"From the time that it was" is parallel to "from the beginning," and takes us back to creation.¹⁹

"There am I" אֲנִי שָׁמָּה appears only one other place in the OT, also in the context of creation:

Pro 8:27 When he prepared the heavens, I was there.

The one speaking in Prov 8 is wisdom, whom Solomon personifies as a woman inviting people to a

¹⁹ The pronoun is feminine, while "beginning" is masculine. My best guess is that the pronoun refers to the earth, whose foundation was in view in v. 13.

banquet (ch. 9). In ch. 8, Dame Wisdom introduces herself, and in 8:22-31 she claims to have existed from the very beginning with God.

The notion of someone distinct from God being present with God at the beginning struck the church fathers as a prophecy of the Messiah.²⁰ I don't think Solomon intends this passage to be prophetic. But Isaiah, by alluding to it, draws our attention back to that text. He reminds us that according to Prov 8, the Lord was not alone at creation. His readers know that Wisdom was with him. Now the speaker in v. 16 claims to have been there, too, in the same way that Wisdom was.

But that poses a problem. In the previous clause, the speaker IS God. In this clause, by his allusion to Prov 8:27, the speaker claims to be WITH God. The third clause makes things even more confusing:

and now the Lord GOD hath sent me, and his Spirit, ~~hath sent me.~~--The Hebrew places the verb after "the Lord God" and before "his Spirit," which allows us to take "his Spirit" as paired either with the sender (as in the KJV) or the one sent. Which we choose will depend on the identity of the one sent.

Some people (going back to Calvin) think that the speaker now switches to Isaiah. Throughout the OT, the Spirit enables prophets to prophecy (Num 11:29; Neh 9:30; etc.). But there is no contextual reason for Isaiah to speak up and assert his divine authority at this point in the argument.

I prefer to see the speaker shifting from the Father to the Son, whose mission as the personified Servant of the Lord comes into focus in the next chapter. Now it makes more sense to understand "and his Spirit" as a second object of the sending. In fact, the Son himself came in the power of the Spirit, and after his ascension, at his request, the Father did send the Spirit as promised under the New Covenant.

The grammatical awkwardness of having the speaker at once identify himself with God and yet speak of being sent by God, reflects the mystery of the unity and yet distinction of the Father and Son.²¹

This observation brings us back to Prov 8:22-31. The speaker here uses the relation between Wisdom and God to illustrate his own priority before all time. This citation makes Wisdom in Proverbs a type of our Lord, a divinely intended picture given in advance.

Let's put this all together. In 14-16, the coming of Cyrus is again announced. Three voices make this announcement:

- The prophet speaks in v. 14, saying that the Lord will send him.
- The Lord speaks in v. 15, claiming to be the sender.

²⁰ The passage was central in the Arian controversy in the fourth century. Both sides assumed that the text speaks of the Son of God, and argued over whether "possessed" (v. 22, translated "create" in the LXX), "set up" (v. 23), and "brought forth" (vv. 24, 25) established the Arian claim that Christ was a created being. Probably, both sides were wrong, and the primary reference of Prov 8 is not to the Son of God (see Waltke's extensive discussion). I find two arguments persuasive.

1. The NT never cites this text in describing the person of Christ. Even John 1, which describes the "word of God" in language reminiscent of Prov 8, never describes our Lord as "wisdom." The word "wisdom" σοφία never appears in John's gospel, and when the NT mentions our Lord in connection with wisdom, wisdom is subordinate to him (he is worthy to receive it, along with other honors, in Rev 5:12 and 7:12, and it is hidden in him, Col 2:3).
2. The text makes sense without such a reference. Solomon is endorsing wisdom to his readers, by pointing out its nobility and high standing. Recall that he received wisdom as a special gift from God. Saying that it was present with God at creation is a poetic way of saying that God is wise, and if he treasures wisdom, so should we.

²¹ Similar grammatical bumps appear in Zech 2:8,9; 4:8,9, where again it is likely that we are seeing the distinction of the Father and Son.

- In v. 16, someone speaks who also claims to be the sender, thus claiming identity with God. But the grammatical tension in the third clause also makes the speaker distinct from the Lord, the one who both was “with God” and “was God” (John 1:1).

17-22, Judgment and Blessing

In the first panel, we saw blessing, then judgment.

In the second, the order was reversed (judgment before blessing), but doubled.

Now the two are related chiastically, with blessing at the center.

17-19 Judgment

17 Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God—Note the piling up of divine titles. Isaiah uses these multiple titles to mark the crescendo of a series.²² Here the series consists of the three panels in 45-48.

The first panel, 45:1-10, begins

45:1 Thus saith **the LORD**

The second, 45:11-13, adds two more titles to its opening line:

45:11 Thus saith **the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker,**

Now we come to the third panel. This time there is no beginning “thus saith X,” probably to maintain the tension in the mysterious relation between the servant and the Lord. But now, as we move into the section on blessing and judgment, the missing introduction appears, with a fourth title,

48:17 Thus saith **the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God**

The major addition is the title “thy Redeemer.” Though common in Isa 40-66, in these four chapters it appears only in this panel (here and 20b), and in an interjection in 47:4. The God who brings judgment can bless, not because of his people’s obedience, but because he himself has redeemed them.

which teacheth thee to profit,--Isaiah uses the verb “to profit” or “to benefit” (Hifil יעל) eight times, more than any other book in the OT. Every other instance describes things that will not benefit them, and six of the other seven we have already seen:

- 30:5, 6, the Egyptians as a source of deliverance from Assyria
- 44:9, 10, idols
- 47:12, enchantments and sorceries
- 57:12, their own righteousness.

Everything else is deceptive and ultimately futile. Only the Lord gives truly profitable instruction.

²² See note on “multiple divine titles” for other examples.

which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go.--How does God teach us to benefit? By describing to us how we should conduct ourselves. Actions have consequences. Those who sow to the flesh reap corruption; those who sow to the Spirit reap everlasting life (Gal 6:8).

The present tense in these verbs, “teacheth” and “leadeth,” represents Hebrew participles. The construction²³ favors translating them not as relative clauses (as in our version), but as predicate nominatives: “I, the Lord thy God, am teaching thee to profit, and leading thee by the way that thou shouldst go.” This is not something that the Lord did once upon a time, or that he promises to do in the future. It characterizes his activity right now, in the very proclamation of his word by Isaiah.

18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!--All of us who are parents can sympathize with the Lord’s frustration. He has given them good counsel, far better than they got from Egypt, or from idols, or from sorcerers. If only they had followed his instruction. Then they would have enjoyed great benefits. Four metaphors describe two classes of benefit.

then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:--These two metaphors emphasize something continual and never-ending. “River” here is the word used to describe the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, not the wadis of Israel that are dry most of the year. The river just keeps on flowing, as the song says,

Ol' man river,
Dat ol' man river...
He jes' keeps rollin'
He keeps on rollin' along.

The waves of the sea just keep coming in, one after another.

The blessings that will thus flow perpetually to God’s people are peace and righteousness. Isaiah draws the pairing of these terms, like so much of his language, from the Psalms:

Psa 72:3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

Psa 85:10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Repeated waves of righteousness are promised to those who hearken to God’s commandments. One might think that their obedience would itself be their righteousness, but the righteousness, like the peace, is seen as a gift. The condition is not that they obey God’s commandments, but that they pay attention to them (קשב Hifil). The Lord’s message here is the same as our Lord Jesus:

Mat 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Paying attention to God’s commandments produces in us a hunger and thirst for righteousness. Only when we realize our need does the Lord then give us his righteousness, as a free gift.

19 Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel²⁴ thereof;--The second benefit that they have rejected is their posterity. Their children would have been like the innumerable grains of sand.

²³ Both participles are indefinite; uses of the participle as a relative clause are most commonly definite. See the examples cited in Waltke-O’Connor 37.5. Alexander allows this reading; no one else seems to notice it.

²⁴ “Gravel” appears only here, but is plural, and the pronoun appears to refer to the “sand,” which is singular.

his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.--They would have continued before the Lord. Alas, most of the children and grandchildren of the generation to whom Isaiah spoke (two-thirds, according to Ezek 5:12) perished in the fall of Jerusalem, and those who survived went into slavery.

20-21 Blessing

Now the pronouns shift from singular to plural, marking a new paragraph. The verbs change as well, from indicative to imperative. The prophet looks beyond the judgment to the time when Cyrus delivers the people. He gives that generation two commands.

20 Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans,--The first command is to leave Babylon. This presupposes that they are free to leave, which is the blessing in view.

with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye,--As they go, they are instructed to proclaim something loudly, so that all the earth can hear it. This message continues through v. 21, marked by the shift from second to third person.

The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.--When they enjoy the very temporal blessing of return to their homeland, they are to give God the glory.

How often do we neglect this principle. When God blesses us publicly, we should acknowledge him as the source of our blessing.

The redemption in view here is historical, as the next verse shows. It lists several characteristics of the exodus from Egypt that were not duplicated in the return from Babylon.

21 And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts:--In the Exodus, they traveled through the desert. On the return from Babylon, they would have followed the fertile crescent.

he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.--Here they are to recall two episodes, in Exod 17 and Num 20, when the Lord brought water out of the rock.

Putting this section together, Isaiah foretells the nation's release from Babylon. He instructs them to take advantage of that release and return to Israel. When they do so, they are to acknowledge that God has delivered them, just as he did 900 years before when he brought them out of Egypt.

22 Judgment

The refrain that marks each of the nine-chapter sections of Isa 40-66 here serves also as a final reminder of the judgment from vv. 17-19.

22 There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.--This verse can be understood as a contrast to 20-21.

- “No peace” contrasts with the ultimate deliverance of 20a. It also recalls the peace like a river (18) available to those who hearken to God's commandments.
- “The wicked” are in contrast with “the redeemed” of 20b-21.

This last contrast is particularly notable. One would think that the opposite of “the wicked” are “the righteous.” Isaiah’s emphasis is that the main contrast is not our behavior, but our state as being redeemed by the Lord.

Notes

Structured Text

45:14-25

<p>14a Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, <i>saying</i>,</p>	<p>20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye <i>that are</i> escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge <i>that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.</i></p>	<p>22a Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:</p>
<p>14b Surely God <i>is</i> in thee; and there is none else, <i>there is</i> no God.</p>	<p>21 Tell ye, and bring <i>them</i> near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? <i>who</i> hath told it from that time? <i>have</i> not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; <i>there is</i> none beside me.</p>	<p>22b for I am God, and there is none else. 23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth <i>in</i> righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.</p>
<p>15a Verily thou <i>art</i> a God that hidest thyself, <i>God answers in v. 19 and 48:16</i></p>	<p>19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. <i>The Lord leads with a rejection of the criticism</i></p>	
<p>15b O God of Israel, the Saviour.</p>	<p>24a Surely, shall <i>one</i> say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: <i>even</i> to him shall <i>men</i> come;</p>	
<p>16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together <i>that are makers of idols</i>.</p>	<p>24b and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.</p>	
<p>17 <i>But</i> Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.</p>	<p>25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.</p>	
<p>18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else.</p>		

47:1-15

Punctuated by imperatives, and alternation between past (sins) and future (judgment). Theme: Babylon has sinned, and will be judged.

The structure of this section is somewhat unclear; a number of themes seem interwoven. Bullinger has detected a number of promising correspondences that suggest three divisions. The first and third loosely correspond:

- Having first been told to sit in humility, Babylon is then called to stand if she can.
- Having heard of the Lord’s opposition to her and his defense of Israel, she is challenged to consider the impotence of her own gods and helpers.

1-5, Declaration of Judgment

This section is marked by a clear inclusio. The center proclaims her humiliation, traces it to the Lord, and reminds her that his wrath against her is balanced by his favor for his people.

Declaration of Judgment	1 Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: <i>there is</i> no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans:	2 Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. 3a Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen:	5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans:
Change from Previous State	for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.		for thou shalt no more be called , The lady of kingdoms.
Source of Judgment	3b I will take vengeance, and I will not meet <i>thee</i> as a man. 4 <i>As for</i> our redeemer, the LORD of hosts <i>is</i> his name, the Holy One of Israel.		

6-11, Indictment of sin

This section sets forth the reason for the judgment in the first section.

Babylon’s Sin	6 I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy ; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.	10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness:
Babylon’s Excuse	7 And thou saidst , I shall be a lady for ever: <i>so</i> that thou didst not lay these <i>things</i> to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.	thou hast said , None seeth me.
Babylon’s False	8 Therefore hear now this, <i>thou that art</i> given to	Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it

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Confidence	pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me ; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:	hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me .
	9 But these two <i>things</i> shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, <i>and</i> for the great abundance of thine enchantments.	11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee ; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, <i>which</i> thou shalt not know.

12-15, Failure of Other Helpers

12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth ;	15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured , <i>even</i> thy merchants, from thy youth :
if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.	they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.
13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels.	14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: <i>there shall not be</i> a coal to warm at, <i>nor</i> fire to sit before it.
Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from <i>these things</i> that shall come upon thee.	

Instances of the Rain-Crop Metaphor

In discussion, some of the saints suggested other instances of this metaphor, which may extend our interpretation of what is encompassed under the descending righteousness קִדְּוָה

Isa 32:15-17 Until **the spirit** be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. 16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. 17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

Isa 44:3-4 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour **my spirit** upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4 And they shall spring up *as* among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

Isa 55:10-11 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11 So shall **my word** be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

Isa 61:11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it

to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. (*no explicit parallel to the descending righteousness*)

45:8 צדק and צדקה

Consider other verses where both forms appear.

Hos 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness צדקה, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness צדק upon you.

Here, צדקה is what man does, and צדק comes from God. The same could hold in 45:8, except that the order is different.

Psa 119:142 Thy righteousness צדקה *is* an everlasting righteousness צדק, and thy law *is* the truth.

In both halves of the verse, the second term (צדק, אמת) is the more abstract, general one.

Isa 58:2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness צדקה, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice צדק; they take delight in approaching to God.

Again, צדקה is what people do, while צדק is the standard.

Eze 3:20 Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness צדק, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness צדקה (plural, righteous deeds) which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Again, צדקה refers to concrete deeds, while צדק is the underlying principle.

More remote separation (adjacent verses):

Psa 40:9-10 I have preached righteousness צדק in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. 10 I have not hid thy righteousness צדקה within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

Psa 72:2-3 He shall judge thy people with righteousness צדק, and thy poor with judgment. 3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness צדקה.

Pro 16:12-13 *It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is established by righteousness צדקה 13 Righteous צדק lips *are* the delight of kings; and they love him that speaketh right.

Isa 1:26-27 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness צדק, the faithful city. 27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness צדקה.

Isa 51:5-6 My righteousness צדק *is* near; my salvation ישע is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. 6 Lift up your eyes to the

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heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation ישועה shall be for ever, and my righteousness צדקה shall not be abolished. (note concomittant repetition of salvation, but again in different forms, with feminines together)

Isa 51:7-8 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness צדק, the people in whose heart *is* my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness צדקה shall be for ever, and my salvation ישועה from generation to generation.

Isa 61:11-62:2 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness צדקה and praise to spring forth before all the nations. 62:1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness צדק thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation ישועה thereof as a lamp that burneth. 2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness צדק, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

Isa 64:5-6 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness צדק, *those that* remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved. 6 But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses צדקה *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Jer 23:5-6 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice צדקה in the earth. 6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS צדק.

Jer 33:15-16 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness צדקה to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness צדקה in the land. 16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness צדק .

Eze 45:9-10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice צדקה, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD. 10 Ye shall have just צדק balances, and a just צדק ephah, and a just צדק bath.

Now consider associations between the two families צדק and צדקה, and ישע and ישועה. Note that all these pairings are either in Psalms or Isaiah!

	צדק	צדקה
ישע	3 ²⁵	3 ²⁶
ישועה	2 ²⁷	5 ²⁸

25 Ps 65:6; Isa 45:8; 51:1

26 Ps 24:5; Isa 45:8; 61:10

27 Ps 119:23; Isa 62:1

28 Ps 98:2; Isa 51:6, 8; 56:1; 59:17

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The spreadsheet below shows the statistics.

- Expected count (row sum * col sum / overall sum) in parentheses in each cell (first position).
- We have four cells and 13 trials. The probability of a hit in a cell is the expected value in the cell (the # in parentheses) divided by 13, or $E/13^2$.
- Then variance in a cell, by the multinomial distribution, is $13 * E/13^2 * (1 - E/13^2) = E/13 - E^2/13^3$, and the standard deviation is just the square root of this.
- Normalized deviation is (observed value - expected value) / standard deviation

The spreadsheet below shows that the deviations in each cell are more than 1 standard deviation away from the expected. There definitely is a tendency to prefer the association of similar forms.

Raw data	3.00	3.00	
	2.00	5.00	6.00
	5.00	8.00	7.00
			13.00
Expected values	2.31	3.69	
	2.69	4.31	
Probability	0.18	0.28	
	0.21	0.33	
Standard Deviation	0.47	0.47	
	0.39	0.57	
Normalized deviation	1.48	-1.48	
	-1.79	1.21	

The Righteousness of God

OT

The phrase itself does not occur, but numerous passages associate the Lord with righteousness. Note the concentration in Pss, Isa, and Jer, a sequence that we often see in Isaiah's motifs.

Psa 7:17 I will praise the LORD according to **his righteousness**: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

Psa 96:13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall **judge** the world **with righteousness**, and the people with his truth.

Psa 98:9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: **with righteousness shall he judge** the world, and the people with equity.

Psa 119:75 I know, O LORD, that thy **judgments are right**, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast **afflicted** me.

Isa 42:6 I the LORD have called thee in **righteousness**, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

Isa 42:21 The LORD is well pleased for his **righteousness'** sake; he will magnify the **law**, and make *it* honourable.

Isa 45:8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down **righteousness**: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it.

Isa 45:13 I have raised him up in **righteousness**, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts.

Isa 45:19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak **righteousness**, I declare things that are right.

Isa 51:1 Harken to me, ye that follow after **righteousness**, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged. (יהוה צדק parallel with יהוה)

Isa 61:3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of **righteousness**, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. (יהוה צדק parallel with יהוה)

Jer 11:20 But, O LORD of hosts, that **judgest righteously**, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

Jer 23:6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. (The Lord is the righteousness that becomes our righteousness)

Jer 33:16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our **righteousness**.

Jer 50:7 All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers. (cf. 31:23, where יהוה צדק refers to Jerusalem, not the Lord!)

Hos 10:12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain **righteousness** upon you.

The Greek expression δικαιοσύνη κυρίου appears only 2x in the OT, 1 Sam 12:7 and Mic 6:5, both times of צדקה.

NT

Rom 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the **righteousness of God** revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Rom 3:21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Rom 3:22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

Rom 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

2Co 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Jam 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

2Pe 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

תהו in 45:18

This verse is commonly used to argue that Gen 1:2 represents the result of judgment, an undefined time after the initial creation of 1:1. There are two good reasons why that is not the case:

- the grammar of 1:1-2, which is not a normal narrative sequence
- the order of revelation; we should interpret Isaiah in light of Genesis, not the other way around.

But the verse does appear to contradict 1:2, so let's consider the word on its own merits. It is clearly a favorite with Isaiah; he uses 11 of its 19 occurrences. Next in line is Job, with 3. It only appears once after Isaiah, in Jer 4:23, probably (like much of Jer) drawn from Isaiah (the coordinated use of תהו and בהו appears only there, Isa 34:11, and Gen 1:2).

מעַת הַיּוֹתָה 48:15

הַיּוֹתָה infinitive construct with suffix usually takes a predicate nominative or adjective. The only other case I've found is Hag 2:16.

Multiple Divine Titles (again)

I presented evidence on titles with "Holy One of Israel" in the notes to 42-44. Now add all instances with "Redeemer" or "Savior," even if they don't have "Holy One."

Double titles appear in the first half of the book, but triple titles only in the second half. The titles "Saviour" and "redeemer" are distinctive to the second half of the book.

Ref	YHWH	... of Hosts	... thy God	Redeemer, Savior	Holy One	Maker etc.	(ruler)	(powerful)
1:4	1				2			

Isaiah 45-48

Ref	YHWH	... of Hosts	... thy God	Redeemer, Savior	Holy One	Maker etc.	(ruler)	(powerful)
5:19					X			
5:24	1	2			3			
10:20	1				2			
12:4-6	1,2				3			
17:7					2	1		
29:19	1				2			
30:11					X			
30:12					X			
30:15	1				2			
31:1	2				1			
37:23					X			
41:14	1			2 Redeemer	3			
41:16	1				2			
41:20	1				2			
43:1	1			4 I have redeemed thee		2 created 3 formed	5 thou art mine	
43:3	1	2		4 savior	3			
43:14	1			2 Redeemer	3			
43:15	1				2	3 Creator of Israel	4 king	
44:2	1					2 made 3 formed		4 help
44:6	1,4	5		3 Redeemer			2 king of Israel	
44:24	1			2 Redeemer		3 formed		
45:11	1				2	3 maker		
47:4	2	3		1 Redeemer	4			
48:17	1,4		5	2 Redeemer	3			
49:7	1			3 Redeemer	2			
49:26	1			2 Savior 3 Redeemer				4 mighty one of

Isaiah 45-48

Ref	YHWH	... of Hosts	... thy God	Redeemer, Savior	Holy One	Maker etc.	(ruler)	(powerful)
								Jacob
54:5	3	4		5 Redeemer	6	1 maker	2 husband	7 God of whole earth
54:8	1			2 Redeemer				
55:5	1		2		3			
59:20				Redeemer				
60:9	1		2		3			
60:14	1				2			
60:16	1			2 Savior 3 Redeemer				4 mighty one of Jacob
63:16	1			3 Redeemer			2 Father	

The longer titles often appear at the end of a series of increasingly longer titles, marking a crescendo.

Three successive matching panels of an alternation:

Isa 41:10 10 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.

Isa 41:13 13 For I **the LORD thy God** will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.

Isa 41:14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith **the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel**.

Consecutive verses:

Isa 12:1-6 And in that day thou shalt say, O **LORD**, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

2 Behold, **God** is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the **LORD JEHOVAH** is my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation.

3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the **LORD**, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. 5 Sing unto the **LORD**; for he hath done excellent things: this *is* known in all the earth. 6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great *is* the **Holy One of Israel** in the midst of thee.

Isa 43:11-15 I, *even* I, *am* the **LORD**; and beside me *there is* no saviour.

12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when *there was* no strange *god* among you: therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the **LORD**, that I *am* **God**.

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13 Yea, before the day *was* I *am* he; and *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

14 Thus saith the **LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel**; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry *is* in the ships.

15 I *am* the **LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King**.

Introduction to corresponding elements in two panels of an alternation:

43:16 Thus saith **the LORD**, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters

44:24 Thus saith **the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee** from the womb

This passage: third of three panels. The other two begin with divine names of increasing complexity. The third waits a few vv.

45:1 Thus saith **the LORD**

45:11 Thus saith **the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker**,

48:17 Thus saith **the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* the LORD thy God**