

ISAIAH

ISRAEL FORGIVEN AND REDEEMED, ISAIAH 44:21-27

Once again in Isaiah, the concept of judgment followed by forgiveness and restoration, which, in terms of the nation, are eschatological events, are revealed by the prophet. These issues have not been permanently resolved in the nation to this day, but they will be. You should be seeing a pattern in Isaiah. The sins of the nation are rebuked and condemned followed by the promise of forgiveness and redemption/restoration at some point in the future, Kingdom promises of covenant fulfillment are confirmed, and the Messiah King is promised to them as their leader in the Messianic Kingdom. They are not all present at any one time in any one pericope, but they are presented as a reoccurring pattern in Isaiah.

The first verse we are studying once again confirms the supernatural formation of Israel as a nation distinct from all the other nations in the world and which has been appointed to His service. Israel is His servant nation.

Isaiah 44:21 ²¹“Remember [זָכַר] these things, O Jacob, And Israel, for you are My servant; I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten [נִשְׁכַּח] by Me.

Remember, זָכַר, means to remember, to recollect, to recall, to think about, to meditate upon referring to recalling knowledge from memory or have a recollection. Remembering should result in action. This verb is an imperative, but what are they commanded to remember? Given the context, Israel needs to remember that they are to have no other gods before Yahweh. He created them and He can save them; conversely, idols create nothing, including Israel, and can save no one. Idols are worthless; the value of Israel's God is infinite.

They should also be remembering their history. God formed them into a people through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He formed them into a nation in Egypt. They should be remembering the powerful, miraculous work of God who brought them out of Egypt with signs, wonders, and miracles, and who took them into the land in the same way. They should have remembered the Mosaic Law and particularly the command to forsake idolatry and false gods (Ex. 20:2-4). They should be remembering all the covenant promises He made to them that must be fulfilled. They should be remembering the blessings and curses promises that Yahweh made to them through Moses (Lv. 26; Dt. 28), and by remembering them, conducting themselves accordingly so that they would be blessed and not cursed. It is worth noting that not only their failure to remember but their rejection of God's promises to bless and to curse led them into experiencing all the curses they were promised for their rebellion. Israel should have known all these things. All of these issues should have been a conscious part of their lives, a part of the national consciousness of the nation—but they were not, and they are not to this day. They should not have needed to be reminded to call these things to mind; they should have been part of the everyday life of the Israelites throughout their history—but they were not.

It is very important for Israel to remember, then and now, the identity that Israel has as Yahweh's servant. He appointed them to His service to be a kingdom of priests to the world and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6); therefore, they should remember the exalted God appointed position they hold. Israel as God's servant nation is a very important concept for them, and for the world, to understand.

"Her God, Yahweh, formed her that she might be His servant. We are, therefore, not to regard Israel merely as an ethnically gifted or spiritually attuned nation that on her own brought deep religious insights into the world. Rather we must see her as a servant, existing in the world simply for the purpose of obeying her God in the performance of what He had commanded. For this end He formed her.... Israel exists not primarily for the benefit of other nations nor for the general welfare of mankind, but to be a servant to her God" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:182-183]. Israel needs to remember that.

Moses told them they were to remember these things throughout their history. Once again, this revelation from God through Isaiah the prophet was redundant; they already knew this command. The problem was they refused to be obedient in this area just as they were rebellious and disobedient in all areas concerning their relationship to Him.

Deuteronomy 8:2, 11, 18 ²"You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.... ¹¹"Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; ... ¹⁸"But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

They needed to remember the past to avoid repeating the judgments God imposed on them for their rebellion during the Exodus. If they remembered, they would be blessed in the land that He gave them. History has revealed that the wilderness judgment was a lesson that was, in fact, forgotten.

We just spent some time in the immediately preceding lessons discussing the folly of idolatry in which Israel was forbidden to participate. "Remember these things" is immediately following a pericope on idolatry. Forgetting Yahweh and forfeiting the blessings of the covenant were entwined with idolatry. The ultimate punishments were banishment from the land and death (Lv. 26; Dt. 28).

Deuteronomy 8:19–20 ¹⁹"It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. ²⁰"Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.

Israel's eventual restoration sounds impossible because Israel never has remembered the things of God they were commanded to remember and do so that it would go well for them. In the face of that, however, is the promise that God will never forget them. The Abrahamic Covenant and its amplifying covenants were all unconditional covenants,

that is, they are dependent for their fulfillment only on God's faithfulness, which is perfectly dependable. He promised to fulfill them; therefore, they will be fulfilled. The Mosaic Covenant was conditional; Israel's blessings depend on fidelity to that covenant. In this verse, they are reminded that He, Yahweh, will never forget them.

Forget, *נָשָׁח*, means to forget, to be forgotten, to cause to forget. The word is negated which means that God will not forget Israel. It is a verb in the imperfect passive form meaning that God is continually not forgetting Israel, and Israel has nothing to say about it. In other words, despite their rebellion and the imposition of divine temporal discipline on the nation for that rebellion, Yahweh is still not forgetting them. He has promised to restore them and fulfill the covenant promises He made to them, and He will do it.

The fact that "remember these things" even had to be said to the people of God's nation is a sad commentary on the spiritual state of Israel—and it still is. It will not be until the rebels are purged from the nation during the Tribulation that the believing remnant is identified that will enter the Kingdom and the Messianic King will rule over them.

Ezekiel 20:33, 37-38 ³³"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.... ³⁷"I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.

The formation of the people and the nation is emphasized once again by the synonymous uses of "Jacob" and "Israel" to refer to the nation. The use of the word "formed" also brings to mind God's creative work in terms of the creation of Israel as a nation that was appointed to God's service as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). Israel was, is, and will continue to be God's servant nation. However, it is only in the future that national Israel will finally, completely fulfill the mission she was created to fulfill.

There are theologians who believe today's Scriptures involve restoration from the Babylonian captivity, and, indeed, the last verse of this chapter and the beginning of the next set forth the revelation of King Cyrus, the Persian king who would be used to conquer Babylon and free the Israelites allowing them to return to Jerusalem. The problem with that line of thinking is that the forgiveness of sins and the promised redemption has never been completely fulfilled to the extent revealed here. Once again, it is my belief, that the return from Babylon, which is certainly in view to an extent, must be considered as a type of the ultimate return that will not take place until the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom. The long-term forgiveness and restoration of national Israel has yet to take place. What took place in connection with Babylon was a foretaste of what is going to happen in the end times.

Here is how one theologian erroneously, at least in my opinion, puts it: "God promised to redeem them through the activities of Cyrus of Persia. He had forgiven their sins. Israel must do their part in response to God's actions. They must remember what God had done and was doing and must return to me. That meant to turn away from their sins and

the gods of Babylonia to their Redeemer. They must join in the hymns of praise to their Redeemer and sing for joy. Why? Because as God redeems his people, he displays his glory in Israel" [Trent C. Butler, *Holman Old Testament Commentary: Isaiah*, 241].

This is all true, but it was not completely fulfilled in the return from Babylon. Israel did not fulfill the duties God assigned them as His personally created servant nation upon their return from Babylon. Only a small number of Jews returned to Jerusalem which cannot in any way be classified as the return of the nation as a whole. This does not fulfill the call to "return to Me" which mostly went unheeded at that time. The nation had to be rebuilt following its destruction at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his army, and it will need to be rebuilt again at the end of the Tribulation when all of the Jewish people from around the world will be regathered into the land for the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom (Mt. 24:31). Israel didn't turn away from their sins when they returned from Babylon. I'm not sure the Israelites engaged in worshiping the Babylonian gods while they were in captivity, but perhaps they did. Most theologians are in agreement that the worship of pagan idols ceased after the captivity. I think that is tempered by the fact that they simply replaced those false gods with other things that became new idols for the Jewish people including the Mosaic Law, wealth, careers, and so on. This is also tempered by the fact that other Scriptures indicate that Israel may return to idolatry during the Tribulation (cf. Is. 30:22). Reading the biblical accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah certainly does not suggest they were singing for joy upon the return from Babylon. Besides, the creation is shouting for joy in this Scripture, not Israel.

I can only conclude, as I have in other Scriptures in Isaiah, that this is a picture of the ultimate forgiveness and restoration to come. Unger agrees with that assessment. "The LORD's redemption comprehends the eventual salvation of the *entire* nation in the millennial Kingdom, in which He will manifest His glory through that nation. That will call forth the joyful shouting of all creation especially mountains (the kingdoms of the millennial nations)" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1265]. Young also realized this was not the return from exile although he does not believe in a literal Messianic Kingdom either. "The reference is not to the return from exile ..." [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:184].

Israel the nation needs exactly what we all need as individuals, Jew and Gentile, which is a remedy for sin. Yahweh, their Redeemer, is that remedy for national Israel's sin problem.

Isaiah 44:22 ²²“I have wiped out [מָחָה] your transgressions like a thick cloud And your sins like a heavy mist. Return [שׁוּב] to Me, for I have redeemed [פָּדַעַל] you.”

Wipe out, מָחָה, means to wipe, to rub over or blot out, to wipe out, to annihilate, or to destroy referring to destroying something which is perceived as wiping it out. It implies the complete removal of something. This word is often used in connection with divine judgment, but, in this case, it is connected to a divine blessing which is the removal of national Israel's sin.

The metaphor of cloud and mist suggests a barrier between God and man just as the atmospheric moisture is between earth and heaven. For God to wipe out Israel's

transgressions is as easy for him as the clouds or a mist are blown away by the wind. It is not a problem for Him at all. For the Creator God, whose creative work was simply the work of His fingers (Ps. 8:3), the blotting out of Israel's sins is a very simple matter for Him as well. Once this happens, Israel's sins will no longer exist, they will never be imputed to Israel again, and the nation's return to Yahweh will be unhindered. This is not about the individual Israelite's justification salvation; it is about the national salvation of Israel.

Return, שׁוּב, means to turn, to return, to go back among a wide range of meanings. Most theologians attach the meaning of repentance to this word, which is incorrect [cf. Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "שׁוּב," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 909]. The word has nothing to do with being sorry for one's personal sins and promising to no longer commit personal sins in the future. Young, for example, erroneously calls this a command to repent [cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:184]. It simply means to return, that is to go or come back to a place, condition, or activity where one has been before. The word is an imperative meaning God has commanded them to return to Him because He has redeemed them.

Redeem, גָּאַל, means to buy back, to redeem, to act as one's kinsman or kinsman redeemer. Of course, the whole concept of the Messiah acting as Israel's Kinsman Redeemer comes into play with the use of this word. The concept of purchasing out of the salve market of sin is implied in this verse. The verb is in the perfect tense indicating completed action, but here it is a prophetic perfect which some theologians refer to as a perfect of certainty. "[R]edemption is spoken of as already complete. This is the translation of the Hebrew prophetic perfect tense that speaks of things in the future as though they had already happened in the past—because they are certain to occur" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible: Volume IV, Isaiah-Daniel*, 126-127]. Redemption is certain to take place based on the divine promise of the God who cannot lie, but that national redemption has yet to occur.

"[I]t refers to redemption from sin and a price has been paid in order that people may be bought back from their sins and upon the basis of which God may forgive those sins. A command to repent [return] is given, because God Himself has paid a price to purchase His people. It is that concept that lies at the heart of the matter.... [T]he reference is to a ransom paid for the deliverance from sin and guilt, and the price God paid for that deliverance was His own Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3: 184].

The redemption revealed here is the final redemption the nation will need in the future by the end of the Tribulation. There have been several acts of redemption for Israel throughout history. The nation was redeemed out of slavery in Egypt. The nation was redeemed out of the Babylonian captivity. We could make the argument that the nation is being redeemed out of the hostility of the *diaspora* that culminated in the Holocaust by the reestablishment of the nation where the Israelites are currently being gathered together in preparation for the Tribulation judgment.

Once this finally happens, even the creation will be overjoyed because God's glory will be on display to the world. Israel will finally be what the nation was created to be and that will be all to God's glory as the Creator of the people and the nation.

Isaiah 44:23 ²³Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done *it!* Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it; For the LORD has redeemed Jacob And in Israel He shows forth [פָּאָר] His glory.

Israel did nothing to be redeemed; Yahweh is the One who has saved and redeemed the nation. The totality of the created order will glorify Him for what He has done. It will be something the world has never before seen to this order of magnitude. Everything will experience a radical change for the better once the Kingdom begins. The mountains, which due to their high-altitude stature were thought to be closer to the gods, hence, the fact that pagans built their shrines to the gods on them, and the forests, from which wooden idols were made, will be rejoicing at the turn of events this Scripture predicts. The lower parts will also shout for joy and praise God for what He has done. These words describe the state of the entire planet, but we have reason to understand this as the entire created order and not just this planet.

In Isaiah 1:2, the created order was called as a witness to Israel's rebellion. Here, the created order is called to witness God's glory as it will be expressed through the redemption of Israel which is something the whole world will notice when Israel is restored in the land and becomes the head of the nations.

We also know that the whole of the creation suffered some damage in the Fall which will be restored when the Messianic Kingdom is inaugurated. Paul related this truth in Romans 8:18-22. Once the King assumes the Davidic Throne, the created order will rejoice.

Psalms 96:10–13 ¹⁰Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity." ¹¹Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and all it contains; ¹²Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy ¹³Before the LORD, for He is coming, For He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.

The Psalmist also related the joy of the creation with the Lord's revelation of His righteousness to the nations for His faithfulness to Israel.

Psalms 98:2–3, 7-9 ²The LORD has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations. ³He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.... ⁷Let the sea roar and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it. ⁸Let the rivers clap their hands, Let the mountains sing together for joy ⁹Before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness And the peoples with equity.

Shows forth, פָּאָר, means to glorify or to show one's glory. This verb form indicates that it is not Israel showing God's glory; instead, God Himself is intensely showing His glory to the

created order by means of His redemptive work with Israel. This verb is also imperfect in tense indicating the complete fulfillment of God's glory being manifested through His redeeming restoration work with Israel is still in the future.

Following immediately after Isaiah's presentation of the folly of idolatry, these verses reveal that there is only one true God, alive and all-powerful, and that He is not a dead piece of wood that can do nothing at all. There are no benefits nor any advantages, to idolatry; it is absolutely worthless. Idolatry can only result in a lifetime of disillusionment followed by spiritual death which is eternal separation from the Creator God. Some theologians believe the emphasis on what follows is not focused on the folly of idolatry as much as they are on God's work as the Redeemer. Given the overall context, I think it best to believe both concepts are in play here; both are certainly true.

As we have moved through the book of Isaiah, we have noted that the prophet frequently moves from the past to the present to the future in an almost dizzying manner. The next verses lead up to the prophecy of Cyrus, the Persian king, who will be the monarch who defeats Babylon and releases the Israelites from captivity to return to Jerusalem. This is still future from Isaiah's standpoint, but it is much closer in time than is the final redemption and restoration of the nation at the end of the Tribulation. Leading up to identifying Cyrus, Yahweh reveals that He is not only the Creator of all that exists, but He is sovereign over it as well. He has a plan for history and that plan will come to pass. Every dark power and spiritual force that exists within His creation is subject to His authority. For the fulfillment of His purposes, He can use kings and he can use paupers, he can use those who are spiritually alive and He can use those who are spiritually dead, and he can use those who are evil and those who are righteous, all in the fulfillment of His divine program for Kingdom history as He has planned it. Even in this Scripture that deals with the restoration of Israel out of the Babylonian captivity, God's redemptive program is much larger than that. As I have mentioned, it appears to me to be a type of the final restoration that awaits future fulfillment to this day. "It becomes evident in this pattern [redemption of Israel and the redemption of the created order] that the redemption being progressively unveiled in the book involves a great deal more than exile and return, although these provide the backdrop on which the larger picture is painted" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 191].

As He begins the declaration that He is the Creator and the Sovereign over it, Yahweh proclaims the fact that He is Israel's Redeemer who is the Creator of not only Israel, but of all that exists. In Israel's eyes, the fact that He is their creator and redeemer should invoke trust in Him that He will care for them, redeem, and restore them as promised. "... God causes His servant's word to stand. Emphasis falls here upon propositional revelation. In contrast to the devious and esoteric means of the soothsayers and diviners, who represent human wisdom apart from God, God Himself speaks by means of words. He has given to man a verbal revelation and this revelation He causes to stand. He can affect the revelations of worldly wisdom, but His own revelation cannot be affected; it will stand" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:190].

Isaiah 44:24 ²⁴Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, "I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth all alone,

As we have previously noted, when a Scripture begins with "Thus says the LORD," it is something that demands attention. It seems to be used to provide the hearer/reader with confidence that what follows is sure to be true and must come to pass as revealed. Also note the "I am" identifying marker for Yahweh that the Israelites certainly would have noticed. This pericope reveals a logical progression extolling the power of God to not only create all that exists, but to control the history of the creation as it moves along in the fulfillment of His Kingdom program that was interrupted by mankind's rebellion and is in the process of being restored. Nothing that exists can prevent this program from coming to fruition. At the time of Isaiah, Yahweh was largely dealing with Israel. In this dispensation, he is largely dealing with the church, but His program is progressing just as it needs to be at any point of time in history.

Once again, the truth that Israel was formed by God to be a people and a nation that is totally apart from all the other people groups and nations on planet earth is affirmed. He also affirms that He, and He alone, is the Creator God and as such has complete control over His creation and all the events occurring within it.

Not only did Yahweh miraculously create the universe and all that is in it, but He specifically created Israel. Finally, in this section, He intends to show that He can make fools of all who claim to know the future. Only the omniscient One, the Creator God can foretell the future and cause it to come to pass which is in contrast with the inability of anyone or anything else to do. Just as God alone created all that exists, God alone can accurately predict the future and bring it to pass. Oswalt detailed all that Isaiah predicted in his book, some of which has yet to be fulfilled, but much of which, now in the past, was accurately predicted to occur just as it did. "Specifically those predictions included Assyria's all but total conquest of Israel and Judah, Assyria's failure to capture Jerusalem, the fall of Assyria, the fall of Jerusalem and Judah to Babylon, the exile, the fall of Babylon to Cyrus, Cyrus's proclamation of freedom and encouragement to rebuild, the return of a remnant, and the establishment of a messianic kingdom" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 192]. Concerning prophecy, the basic premise for those of us who believe the Word of God to be inspired and inerrant, is that predictive prophecy that has come to pass is an absolutely reliable indicator that prophecy which is yet to be fulfilled will, in fact, one day come to pass as well.

The next verse indicates that Yahweh will make fools of all the false prophets who claim to be able to divine the future and of all those who think they are wise but are, in reality, ignorant fools. Those who operate in the dark arts of astrology, divining, and fortunetelling operate on the basis that the past is an accurate basis for predicting the future. Yahweh does not operate that way; He can move history in any way, in any manner, in any direction, and at any time in which He chooses to do so. The charlatans advising the ancient kings usually provided optimistic forecasts of future events (cf. Dan. 2:1-13; 2 Chron. 18:12-27); kings didn't want to hear anything that indicated their reign was in

jeopardy. If they did hear something they didn't like, they were quite likely to kill the messenger!

Isaiah 44:25 ²⁵Causing the omens [אֹתוֹת] of boasters [בְּדִי] to fail [פָּרַר], Making fools [הֶלְלִי] out of diviners [קֹסְמִים], Causing wise [הַחֲכָמִים] men to draw back And turning their knowledge into foolishness [טִבְלִי].

Omen, אֹתוֹת, means a sign, a miracle, a distinguishing mark referring to a marvelous event manifesting a supernatural act of a divine agent, often with an emphasis on communicating a message. This word describes awe-inspiring events. As a sign or a mark, it is a non-verbal symbol or signal which has meaning, either as a crafted or a natural object. Unbelievers can perform signs, wonders, and miracles, but they are false, and they will ultimately fail because God causes them to fail. Signs, wonders, and miracles are always used to authenticate the message and the messenger. The difference between false and true is not found in the nature of the miracles themselves; it is found in who or what the miracles are authenticating. A miracle either authenticates God or His messenger, making it true, or it authenticates Satan and his messenger, making it false. These signs are designed to fool people into thinking these idle talkers are representing Yahweh; therefore, what they are presenting is not the truth.

Boasters, בְּדִי, means trifles, falsehoods, liar, diviner, false prophet, or boasting and bragging. It refers to an empty prophet, that is, a prophet conceived of in terms of a word meaning empty talk or idle talk, perhaps with an emphasis on the words of the prophet never coming to pass. It also refers to a liar who is a person who has lied or lies repeatedly. It describes those who engage in boasting or idle talk which is confident, even prideful, speech not warranted by actual facts. It also refers to an oracle priest which is the translation the Lexham English Bible uses.

Fail, פָּרַר, means to break, to make void, to frustrate or thwart, foil, or make useless. The general sense is to break or nullify in terms of violating a treaty, covenant, or agreement and so be in a state of disassociation. In this verse, the specific sense is to thwart, frustrate, or foil in order to cause to fail in some measure a state or a condition. This verb form is in the causative form which is why the NASB reads, "Causing the omens of boasters to fail."

A more literal translation of this clause in this verse would be: "One causing to thwart the signs of the empty talkers." It is God who causes the false prophets and teachers to ultimately be thwarted. They may succeed for a period of time at various times in history by fooling people about the truth and leading them away from God rather than to Him, but their ultimate fate is failure.

Diviners, קֹסְמִים, means to practice divination, that is, seeking to determine the future through signs, omens, or supernatural powers. The word includes practicing necromancy, augury, including the casting of arrows, the examination of the inner organs of an animal such as the liver or the entrails, or interpreting visions. It could also refer to other phenomena of the creation such as astrology. If and when God so chose to do so, He could cause diviners to utter false prophecies to confound those who hired them (cf. 2 Chron. 18:18-22). Presumably, He could also cloud the understanding of those who were hearing the prophecies of these false prophets.

Wise, חָכָם, means a wise man who is skillful or experienced, shrewd, intelligent and is therefore a wise and trusted guide and advisor. It refers to those who are thought to have a capacity for understanding and discernment. Of course, one who is acclaimed by the world to be wise according to the world's standards of wisdom is not wise at all; he is instead a fool. The men who possess godly wisdom, which is wisdom that should be prized above all other forms of wisdom, are not the men who operate according to the wisdom of the world which is the subject here.

All of this relates to men of the world being fools and exhibiting foolishness. God, as expressed through the Word of God, does not tolerate fools and foolishness. I think that being called a fool by God is a seriously deficient and abhorrent evaluation of a person's life and integrity in their relationship with Him.

Fool, הָלַל, means to be boastful, to be infatuated, to make a mockery of, to make look foolish, or to act like a madman. The sense as used here is to make a fool of, that is, to show to be or cause to be lacking in good judgment. The verb reflects intensity; these people are fools to the maximum. This word also means to praise; therefore, context is key to understanding its use in any particular situation. This may be a play on words between these two meanings. "The diviners should bring praise to their gods, but when God interferes with their explanation of the signs, he shows these diviners to be very foolish and confused" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 248, n. 535]. A number of translations believe this is a reference to driving the diviners mad (KJV, NKJV, ASV, YLT).

Foolish, חָכָל, means to behave foolishly referring to acting or behaving in a way that shows a lack of wisdom or understanding good judgment. Acting in this way is indefensible and without reason particularly when rebelling against God and His Word.

In contrast to the words of the pagan wise men, God's servant and God's messengers are relaying the truth and it will come to pass.

Isaiah 44:26 ²⁶Confirming [קָוִים] the word of His servant And performing [שְׁלֵמָה] the purpose [עֲצָדָה] of His messengers. *It is I* who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise up her ruins *again*.

These verses are leading into the identification of Cyrus as the one who will liberate the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity. Here, the Lord is confirming the word of His prophet, Isaiah, and, through him, God is promising to restore Jerusalem and Judah. Some theologians believe that the reference to the servant refers to national Israel which does have some prior support in Isaiah's book; therefore, the messengers are those Israelites who are called to be God's messengers. "By 'his servant' we are to understand Israel itself, according to ch. 42:19, but only relatively, namely, as the bearer of the prophetic word, and therefore as the kernel of Israel regarded from the standpoint of the prophetic mission which it performed; and consequently 'his messengers' are the prophets of Jehovah who were called out of Israel. The singular 'his servant' is expanded in 'his messenger' into the plurality embraced in one idea" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, 441-442].

Confirm, **קָיָם**, means to substantiate by establishing the validity of something, to come to fruition. The verb form indicatives causative action resulting in the meaning, "One causing the fulfilling of the word of His servant." God will see to it that the Word He is revealing through the prophet Isaiah will be fulfilled. God speaks by means of the spoken word in contrast to the pagan diviners who speak according to aspects of the created order.

Perform, **שָׁלַם**, means to be whole, to be safe, to be completed or finished referring to fulfilling or putting into effect. This verb is in a causative verb form meaning that God is going to cause the prophet's words to come to pass and be put into effect. Jerusalem and Judah will be restored.

Purpose, **עֲצָה**, means advice, counsel, or plan. It may refer to God's plan for something or someone. In this context, it does refer to a plan referring to a series of steps to be carried out or goals to be accomplished. The word is used in a positive sense in connection with wisdom and understanding. The literal meaning of this clause is, "And He [God] will cause the fulfillment of the plan of His messengers." Of course, this plan is God's plan as it has been communicated through the prophets.

Babylon is not mentioned here; therefore, all the people could glean from this at the time is that there is going to be a war that will ruin the nation, but they will be restored at some time in the future and the nation will be rebuilt.

The last verse seems to be a reference to the Red Sea crossing of the Exodus implying the safe return of Israel into the land. Some theologians believe this may be a reference to the method many believe Cyrus used to enter Babylon to conquer it, but we will see in a later lesson that legend (diverting the Euphrates River) is questionable.

Isaiah 44:27 ²⁷"It is I who says to the depth of the sea, 'Be dried up!' And I will make your rivers dry.

There will be a way made for the exiles to return to Judah and Jerusalem just as there was a way made for them to safely leave Egypt and get to the Promised Land. Or, if the Cyrus interpretation is correct, which is probably is not, there was a way made by draining the Euphrates River for the Persian King to enter Babylon and conquer the city.

At the end, there will not be a miraculous crossing of a body of water, but there will be a highway built to facilitate their return (Is. 11:16, 35:8) and angels to gather them up from all over the earth (Mt. 24:31) in whatever manner that will take place. No highway needed to be constructed for the return from the Babylonian captivity, because Cyrus ensured a safe return to Israel by means of a well-known and well-traveled route from Babylon to Jerusalem.

This has end times implications. Israel needed deliverance from ancient Babylon and Israel will need deliverance from the Babylonian world system that will be in existence at the end of history as we know it.