

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 51:12-16, YOU ARE MY PEOPLE

In response to the requests made by the Israelites in verses 9-11, God provides some words of comfort in verses 12-16.

Isaiah 51:12 ¹²“I, even I, am He who comforts [יְנַחֵם] you. Who are you that you are afraid [יִרְאָה] of man [אֲדָמוּם] who dies And of the son of man [בְּנֵי אָדָם] who is made like grass,

This verse begins with three personal pronouns in a row—I, I, He—and that is very emphatic; Motyer calls it a duplication of intensity [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 324]. The word order also indicates emphasis. Normal word order in Hebrew is verb followed by subject. When the subject is first, that is a marker of emphasis which is the situation in this verse. That is why the KJV, NKJV, ASV, and NASB translators inserted the word “even” in the verse (which should be in italics because it is not in the original text). The translators wanted to show the emphasis that is present in the Hebrew text, but which is not quite so apparent in English. This verse literally reads: “I, I, He One comforting you.” In English, we need to smooth it out a bit to read: “I, I, [am] He, [the] One comforting you.”

Isaiah 51:12 ¹²“I, I *am* he who comforts you ... (LEB, ESV, TANAKH).

Isaiah 51:12 ¹²—I am the One who comforts you.... (CSB).

Isaiah 51:12 ¹²—I *am* He—your comforter ... (YLT).

Some theologians assert that this is the “I AM” construction identifying the self-existent God, but it is not the same. So many good exegetes make that claim that I am reluctant to contradict it, but the text does not say that. The truth surrounding that name is applicable here, but it is not what this text says in terms of identification. In Exodus 3:14, the “I AM” is the verb אֶהְיֶה from הָיָה. In this verse, these words are simply personal pronouns. We supply the word “am” to smooth out the translation in English, but it is not part of the words in the text. God is making this declaration in response to the questions asked in verses 9-10 concerning the powerful God who performed the miraculous deeds that delivered Israel out of Egypt.

“God does not merely respond with a mild ‘I am your comforter.’ Instead he says, ‘I, I *am* he, your comforter.’ ‘I am he’ is the expression of self-existence that is repeatedly used of God in this part of the book. Thus the reality of God being able to comfort his people is predicated on a much greater reality: the uniqueness and incomparability of God. Yes, he created the world, and yes, he redeemed Israel from Egypt; but more than that, he is the one being like whom there is no other in the universe. Can such a being as that ‘comfort,’ that is, breathe life, hope, strength, and encouragement into his people? if not he, then who?” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 345]. While this is true, I think it is putting a little too

much into this text. The "I AM" is not really stated here, and creation wasn't part of the text in verses 9-10, although the argument could be made that the miracles done in the acts of overcoming Rahab and the dragon and in drying up the sea, represent situations that only the Creator could do, but that is an implication, and not a revelation, in these texts.

It is a little more subdued, but more accurate in terms of the text, to understand this construction as an emphatic response to the question, "Was it not you ..." in verses 9-10. God's response is that it was Him who redeemed them in Egypt and took them out. It is Him who is going to see to it that the nation one day realizes the fulfillment of the covenant promises revealed in verse 11. Therefore, He is the One who is intensely, continually comforting them.

Comfort, נָחַם, in this verb form, always means to console or to comfort, and the participle verb form refers to being a constant source of comfort. It refers to being in a state or condition of finding a measure of relief from sorrow and distress and so be consoled or encouraged. The sense is that of a comforter who commiserates with someone who has had misfortune.

The book of Isaiah 1-39 discussed the foolishness of Israel as she trusted in foreign alliances for security rather than trusting in God. Beginning in Isaiah 40, "there was need for the message that true comfort (consisting of deliverance from sin and its consequences) would come from the Lord, Israel's God. It is this theme that Isaiah develops and propounds from chapter forty on, and in this verse the theme finds a classic expression" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:315]. This the same word that initiates this second part of the book in Isaiah 40:1.

Isaiah 40:1 ¹ "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God.

There is no doubt that Israel needs comfort, but we must also remember that their difficulty stems from their rebellion against God. They are suffering the curses that are attached to God's temporal divine disciplinary program for disobedience and rebellion. They could have been enjoying blessings for obedience and faithfulness, but they refused. However, as verse 11 reveals, one day they will experience the joy of the Messianic Kingdom. Right now, they need the comfort that only God can give them. God has not forgotten them, He has a plan to restore them, and He is comforting them in the meantime whether they know it or not.

If God is promising to restore them and to comfort them, then why are they so afraid of merely mortal men whose lives are as fleeting as the grass? "[H]ere human frailty is underlined by three additions: *mortal* (lit. 'who die'), *sons of men* ('Adam/humankind') and *grass*. They suffer a threefold frailty: death is at work, they are of (mere) human origin, and are essentially fragile" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 324].

There are two words translated "man" in this verse.

Man, אִישׁ, is of uncertain origin. It may derive from a word meaning to be weak or sick, and there are contexts in which it is used where it focuses on man's weakness and

mortality, or it may derive from a word emphasizing man as a social being. It often occurs in passages emphasizing man's frailty, as it does here. It may refer in a more generic sense to mankind, i.e., man as a collective group of people, the totality of mankind, living on planet earth, but it may also refer to an individual. This word emphasizes the basic distinction between God and man who is insignificant before God. Men are of the earth; God is of heaven. Men are mortal; God is divine. The word is a reminder to mankind that man is a transient, finite being and therefore insignificant in comparison to God.

Man, אָדָם, means a male, any human being, or generically the human race, i.e., mankind. "This word for man has to do with man as being in God's image, the crown of creation.... 'ādām connotes man in the image of God as to: soul or spirit (indicating man's essential simplicity, spirituality, invisibility, immortality), physical powers or faculties (the intellect and will with their functions), intellectual and moral integrity (true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness), body (as a fit organ of the soul sharing its immortality, and as the means through which man exercises his dominion), and dominion over the lower creation" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "אָדָם," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 10].

These two words seem to represent man as he is in his fallen state, weak and frail, alongside the word for man identifying him in the manner of what he was created to be, yet now fallen, subject to death, and living a very brief, transient life. This is not a good picture of mankind.

The implication presented by the question concerning the fear the Israelites had of mortal man who comes to life for a short time and then withers away and dies just like the grass is why are you afraid of man when you have Me to comfort you? The people of God should be directing their attention to the God of the people instead of to the sinful, dying state of the world around them.

Fear of dying is a normal, human reaction to death; no one wants to die. Furthermore, mankind was not created to die which seems to indicate that there is something in us which recoils from the invasion of death into life. Death is a situation mankind introduced into the world by means of disobedience and rebellion. It is a normal reaction to experience fear when confronted with a situation involving one's death especially when the situation is sudden and there is no time to think about what is going on. We experience some degree of fear in those situations. It is one thing to experience some measure of fear, but it is another thing to allow that fear to debilitate one's ability to properly react to that fear. Living life in constant fear is not living a life of faith. Afraid, יָרָא, means to fear, to be afraid, and to be frightened referring to being in a state of feeling great distress and deep concern over pain or unfavorable circumstances.

For the Israelites, who possessed the covenant promises of God, there was no need to fear man. They had been promised protection from calamities of various types and for God's provision to meet their needs (Lv. 26:1-13; Dt. 6:10-11, 7:12-15, 28:1-14).

Leviticus 26:3–10 ³If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, ⁴then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. ⁵Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your

food to the full and live securely in your land. ⁶I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making you tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. ⁷But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; ⁸five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword. ⁹So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm My covenant with you. ¹⁰You will eat the old supply and clear out the old because of the new.

Clearly, fear was not supposed to be part of Israelite life. If they had been obedient, they would have had no need to fear other people; other people would have instead feared them. "If the Almighty God of the exodus is on their side, they have no need to fear the puny and transitory men of this world" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 406].

Deuteronomy 11:25 ²⁵"No man will be able to stand before you; the LORD your God will lay the dread of you and the fear of you on all the land on which you set foot, as He has spoken to you.

Deuteronomy 28:10 ¹⁰"So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you.

In terms of application for those who are believers in Christ Jesus in this dispensation, living life with a biblical worldview should give us an understanding of fear even while our normal fear reactions to the events of our lives are still present. The worst thing that can happen to us here, our death, is, in the eternal view of things, the best thing that can happen because it immediately ushers us into the presence of our God for eternity. The conclusion is that our focus should be more on living life with a biblical worldview that maximizes our attention on glorifying God, teaching, learning and living sound doctrine, and preaching the Gospel, and less on living our best life now. Our lifespan is only as long as our Lord allows us to have another breath anyway, so why not live life with an eternal, biblical worldview and stop being afraid?

"This is a call to live out the reality of our confession, to make creed and behavior coincide. If God is the creator, then we need not fear the anger of any oppressor, no matter how horrifying his or her plans are. None of this is to deny the horror, the pain, the degradation of oppression. This is not an exercise in self-delusion (imagine you are not being oppressed and you won't be!). Rather, it is a call to focus on a larger reality. If the oppressor fills my horizon, then I have only one option: be ruled by fear and hatred. But if a larger reality fills my horizon, then where is the anger of the oppressor? If we know that it is God who holds our ultimate destiny, then the oppressor no longer holds power over us. Yes, oppressors may hurt us, even kill us, but they do not have the power to make us fear them or hate them. God is the ruler over all" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 346].

In Isaiah 49:14 the Israelites wondered whether or not God had forsaken and forgotten them. The real problem was that the Israelites had forsaken and forgotten God.

Isaiah 51:13 ¹³That you have forgotten [שָׁכַח] the LORD your Maker [עֲשֵׂה], Who stretched out the heavens And laid the foundations of the earth, That you fear [פָּחַד] continually [תָּמִיד] all day long because of the fury [תַּמָּה] of the oppressor [צוֹק], As he makes ready to destroy [שָׁחַת]? But where is the fury of the oppressor?

In verses 9-10, the Israelites were asking whether or not Yahweh was the God of the Exodus. Now, Yahweh is affirming that He is even more; He is the God of creation, and He is able to free the Israelites from the difficult situation in which they find themselves and restore them. The Israelites' rebellion has warped their thinking. They wonder whether or not Yahweh is truly the God of the Exodus, and they have forgotten that He is the God of Creation which is a revelation of His omnipotence which He proved to them by means of the miracles He performed in their presence during the Exodus. Because He is all-powerful, He is certainly capable of caring for His people, but they have forgotten that fact.

Forgotten, שָׁכַח, means to forget referring to not remembering information and so to lose sight of its significance which implies no proper response or an improper response in some contexts. People can completely forget something, or they can gradually lose their memory of something as time goes on and the details of the incident fade away. In terms of Israel's relationship with God, forgetting is more than simply losing the memory of something. "Forgetting is not simply a psychological act of having a thought pass from one's consciousness, a temporary or permanent lapse of memory. This is indicated by the frequent identification of the verb with action. To forget God is to ignore his commandments. To forget God is to follow other gods; to forget God is to stand in fear of harm and danger, to live fretfully and timidly [which is the situation in Is. 51:13]. To forget God is to challenge him. The Bible would indicate that satiety is the major factor for forgetting God" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "שָׁכַח," *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 922]. The reality is that all of these things played into Israel's forgetfulness in terms of God's relationship with them, because Israel did all of these things. Israel ignored God's commandments; Israel followed other gods; Israel feared many things they had no need to fear; Israel became satisfied with their national prosperity. The result was that they forgot the God who made it all possible.

This is personal to God; He identifies Himself as "your" Maker. We have previously established the fact that God specifically created Israel to be a people and a nation distinct and separate from all other people and nations.

Maker, עֲשֵׂה, means to make something by fashioning or creating an object usually implying the use of existing materials. This word is a participle; therefore, this could be translated, "... Yahweh [the] One making you ..." which implies a continual process. "Maker: the One who has made you for himself and will go on 'making' (the word is a participle in the Hebrew) until you are what he intends" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 325].

This is not the first time in Isaiah that Yahweh definitely said that He specifically created Israel.

Isaiah 44:2 ²Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

Stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth are a figurative way of saying that Yahweh, Israel's Maker, also made everything else that exists, the heavens and the earth. As such, He is powerful enough to protect Israel and halt all the oppression and danger the nation can ever face. "Stretched" and "laid the foundations" are participles identifying the ongoing superintendence of the created order by the Creator. In the same way, we noted that Israel's Maker has an ongoing ministry to the nation during which He is superintending the nation throughout the course of history. "[S]tretched ... laid the foundations ... The absolute sovereignty the Lord displayed in the original act of creation continues in his direct managerial control of his created world, where he is for ever over (heavens) and under (foundations)" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 325].

In light of the fact that Yahweh is all-powerful and created everything that exists, why is Israel, the nation with which He has a covenantal relationship, so continuously fearful? They should not live that way, but they do. Part of the answer is that they are being subjected to divine temporal discipline for their rebellion and disobedience, and the nations of the world are being used, to some extent, as God's instrument through which He imposes His disciplinary program. Because Israel does not trust in Israel's God, Yahweh, to comfort and protect them, Israel is afraid of the nations. Having given the Israelites over to the nations to face His disciplinary action, the nations take full advantage of their position to unleash a tremendous amount of fury against Israel and her people.

Babylon is a prototype in this regard. Their destruction of Judah and Jerusalem was an assignment from God when He appointed the Chaldeans to be His disciplinary tool, but they went so far beyond their God ordained mandate that they themselves incurred divine wrath for what they did to Judah.

Isaiah 47:6 ⁶"I was angry with My people, I profaned My heritage And gave them into your hand. You did not show mercy to them, On the aged you made your yoke very heavy.

Psalms 137:8 ⁸O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, How blessed will be the one who repays you With the recompense with which you have repaid us.

Jeremiah 51:6 ⁶Flee from the midst of Babylon, And each of you save his life! Do not be destroyed in her punishment, For this is the LORD's time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her.

Because Israel as a nation has subjected itself to God's divine temporal discipline, much of which has been and still is implemented at the hands of pagan nations operating under the control of Satan's world system, the Israelites have lived in continual fear for centuries not only of other people and nations, but of the church as well. The primary antagonist against the Jews in terms of the church has been the Roman Catholic Church, but while Protestant replacement theology has been less brutal, it has been no less antagonistic to the Israelites. Of course, the Pentateuch explains all of this in the cursing sections of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, but they, for the most part, if they practice Judaism at all, practice Rabbinical Judaism, and do not resort to the Word of God for direction.

So, instead of being informed enough to remedy the problem by turning back to God, they continually live their lives in fear. They anticipate the arrival of the Messiah, but they fail to acknowledge He already came and they rejected Him.

Fear, פָּחַד, means to make tremble in fear, to be in dread, to be afraid, or to live in terror referring to having an attitude or emotion of severe distress over impending danger or trouble with a focus that it can be so intense that it will cause physical trembling and shaking. This verb form is very strong and indicates that this fear is a very intense, continual fear.

One aspect of the curses imposed on the nation was terror which would be so bad that even when persecution and oppression was not actively occurring to them, they would still live in such a state of fear that they would irrationally react to any stimulus that could even remotely be perceived as an act of persecution.

Leviticus 26:16, 36-37 ¹⁶, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror ... ³⁶As for those of you who may be left, I will also bring weakness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. And the sound of a driven leaf will chase them, and even when no one is pursuing they will flee as though from the sword, and they will fall. ³⁷They will therefore stumble over each other as if *running* from the sword, although no one is pursuing; and you will have *no strength* to stand up before your enemies.

Deuteronomy 28:65-67 ⁶⁵“Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. ⁶⁶“So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷“In the morning you shall say, ‘Would that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Would that it were morning!’ because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you will see.

Continual, תָּמִיד, means continually, constantly, or regularly referring to a duration of time, either constant or episodic, but continuous. This word perfectly describes the situation Israel has faced at least since 586 BC.

The continual fear the nation has and still is experiencing is due to the fury expressed by those who are oppressing them.

Fury, חֶמָה, means anger, wrath, fury, and rage referring to a very strong feeling of displeasure, hostility, and antagonism, usually in relation to a wrong, real or imagined, as an extension of the heat and burning feeling one can have when one is emotionally worked up and in strife and turmoil. It has the sense of a feeling of intense anger.

Who is and what is the oppressor?

Oppressor, צוּק, means to inflict or to oppress referring to causing trouble and hardship and it refers to those who cause the trouble and the hardship. The sense is to cause distress by bringing someone into difficulties.

The identity of the oppressor is harder to pin down, and it seems to have three aspects to it.

First, God, by imposing His divine temporal discipline on Israel is imposing His fury on them. The same word translated “fury” in Isaiah 51:13 is translated “wrathful” in Leviticus 26:28 as a reference to God’s anger against His rebellious nation.

Leviticus 26:28 ²⁸then I will act with wrathful [חַמָּה] hostility against you, and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins.

Second, it should be obvious that the people and the nations that God commissioned to be His agents in the imposition of His divine temporal disciplinary program are Israel’s oppressors.

The third aspect of the oppressor is Satan. He has hatched numerous plots throughout history to thwart God’s plan for history by trying to destroy the Israelites and their nation. If He can do that, then there will be no Jews to ask Christ Jesus to return and save them at the end of the Tribulation (Mt. 23:39).

The purpose for the persecution of Israel, at least on the part of Satan and his world system, is the destruction of the nation. God’s intention, on the other hand, is not destruction but corrective discipline, and He has promised to protect, preserve, and restore the nation once His divine disciplinary program has ended. The Scripture here in Isaiah is referring to the destruction of the nation.

Destroy, *שָׁחַ*, means to destroy, to ruin, to wipe out, to be corrupt, marred or ruined pertaining to an object being in a ruined state which implies it is now useless. The sense of this word is to destroy completely and to damage irreparably. This verb form is causative meaning that the oppressor is the one attempting to accomplish the destruction of Israel, and it also indicates that it is the purpose or intention of the oppressor to destroy the nation.

The verse ends with a rhetorical question indicating that the fury of the oppressor has disappeared. “The rhetorical question implies that he had suddenly vanished and his fury was gone” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1288]. “The very question implies that it is gone, never to reappear” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:316]. Many theologians try to force this concept into a historical incident, but this can only be something that happens at the end of the Tribulation when the Lord returns to save Israel from annihilation at the hands of antichrist and his army. “Another option that might be considered is that this opposition is referring to an eschatological enemy, just before God destroys them and establishes his kingdom” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 408].

The next verse promises freedom for the exiles and safety from further oppression.

Isaiah 51:14 ¹⁴“The exile [צָעִיר] will soon be set free, and will not die in the dungeon, nor will his bread be lacking.

The default position for most theologians is to see the existence of the exiles as a reference to the Babylonian captivity, but, once again, the facts of the Scripture do not verify that interpretation.

The Israelites who went into exile in Babylon did not die in dungeons, and they were not lacking food. In fact, they were commanded to go there, build houses, and plant gardens.

Jeremiah 29:4–7 ⁴“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, ⁵“Build houses and live *in them*; and plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶“Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. ⁷“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’

“*Terror ... wrath ... oppressor ... destruction* were not the conditions of the Babylon exile, and a prophet actually living in the exile would not have spoken in this way” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 325].

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God told the Israelites to leave Jerusalem and voluntarily go to Babylon in order to escape death when Babylon finally attacked the city for the final time.

Jeremiah 27:12–13, 17 ¹² spoke words like all these to Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people, and live! ¹³“Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, famine and pestilence, as the LORD has spoken to that nation which will not serve the king of Babylon? ... ¹⁷“Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live! Why should this city become a ruin?

While some theologians apply Isaiah 51:14 to the Babylonian captivity, incorrectly, I think, they also recognize the Babylonian situation as a type of the final deliverance of Israel prior to entering the Messianic Kingdom. “While this was true of the Babylonian exiles, the promises of salvation in this section of the book anticipate a larger spiritual redemption as well, as I have noted. In fact, life in Babylonian exile was far from harsh for most of the Israelites, so much so that most of them chose not to return to the Promised Land when they could” [Thomas L. Constable, “Isaiah” in *Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:147].

“The exile will soon be set free” is a difficult clause to interpret and understand. Literally, it reads: “He will make haste the fettered one to be freed.” Exile, *הִצְרָה*, in this context, means “to imprison, to take captive. It depicts a person imprisoned, kept in confinement and in chains” [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. “,” *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 960]. The word may mean to be in chains and to be cowering in prison. This clause certainly describes the situation in which the nation will find itself during the Tribulation. After all the centuries of persecution the nation has experienced, their restoration is said to be at hand. Again, this is a prophecy that will take place during the Tribulation

and the freedom it reveals can only be accomplished at the end of the Tribulation, and it is an end result that can only be brought about by Yahweh.

Isaiah 51:15 ¹⁵“For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the LORD of hosts is His name).

This is a very emphatic declaration that God is in control of everything. The fact that He is the omnipotent Creator God highlights His power to control not only the creation, but to control history as well. He who can cause the ocean to be stirred up and/or calmed down can certainly deliver Israel from whatever difficulty in which the nation finds itself. This verse is linked to what comes before which serves as affirmation that those things will all come to pass. The focus here is on God and on His omnipotent power which leads to His ability to redeem and restore rather than the focus being on the problem, which is what people tend to focus on.

God identifies Himself as “Yahweh your God” and as “Yahweh of armies.” These are names that refer to His power. That power has been evident in the past and that will be exercised in the future. “In that capacity of limitless power, His appropriate name is given as the Lord of hosts (Marshaler of the heavenly armies and Controller of the armies of earth). As such, He would destroy Babylon’s military might and overthrow the Antichrist and his armies, as well as satanic and demonic powers, at His glorious second advent and Kingdom” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1288].

God’s Word is the mechanism through which these things will come to pass.

Isaiah 51:16 ¹⁶“I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, ‘You are My people.’”

The Servant comes back into view, although theologians argue over whether it is the Servant or the nation that is the subject. The problem is that the nation cannot establish the heavens and found the earth, but the Servant can. Furthermore, the one with the words who has been protected by God speaks to Zion. The Servant must be a Person and must be the one addressed here. This verse is also eschatological going even beyond the Messianic Kingdom to the new heavens and the new earth at the hands of the Servant who speaks God’s words as a disciple would do (Is. 50:4), and who God helps face the difficulties set before Him (Is. 50:7).

“[I]f we regard this as a promise of a new creation, of a new heaven and a new earth, filled with the righteousness of God, and where restored and redeemed Israel is again the people of God, then the passage makes beautiful sense. This apparently was what the prophet had in mind (cf. Isa. 65:17)” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 395]. Since the heavens and the earth are already created, this must be a reference to the new heavens and the new earth that are still future at this time (Is. 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 21:1).

This is yet another affirmation that God is going to keep His promises to Israel. He is going to answer the cry of Israel revealed in verses 10-11; He is the Deliverer out of Egypt, and He will be the nation's deliverer in the future.

"To establish," "to found," and "to say" are infinitive constructs and they point to purpose or to result. These could be translated "in order to establish," "in order to found," and "in order to say." "Starting from the fundamental meaning of לָ, i.e., *direction towards something*, infinities with לָ serve to express the most varied ideas of purpose or aim ..." [Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 114 f, 348]. לָ is a preposition meaning to, toward, for.

"Planting [establishing] is a new beginning; laying foundations represents permanence of achievement. The Servant is the origin of a new cosmic reality.... the Servant will plant heaven and earth, a new-creational works such as only God can do. Finally, the Servant is 'to say to Zion': at the centre of the Lord's cosmic purposes is his people. *My people*: the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant promise" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 326].

These promised results speak for themselves. There will be new heavens and a new earth, and the Israelites will indeed be God's people and therefore will finally be the faithful nation He created it to be.