

Is. 51:1 Hearken 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.

Is. 51:2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

The LORD continues to call His people to remembrance. Emphasis is made that He is speaking at this point to those who are pursuing the things that are right and are “seeking” the Lord. The Hebrew for the word *seeking* stated, “to search out (by any method, specifically in worship or prayer).” This would indicate that these people are not just going through rituals when they bring their sacrifices and offerings to the Lord; the motivations of their hearts are pure.

At first read it doesn't sound like a good thing to compare Abraham and Sarah to a rock and the hole of a pit. I think you have to look at the end of verse two to get the perspective. The prophet is referencing a rock quarry. Many stones or much gravel are obtained from one rock. That seems to be the intent of the comparison. Abraham was singled out by God to become the father of the nation of Israel. Through the offspring of this one man and his wife would descend the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, a people that He promised Abraham would be as the sand of the sea and the stars in the sky.

Genesis 22:17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies....

The message is one of encouragement to those in the nation who are truly seeking to follow God. Though few, God is able to bless them and multiply them in the same way that He blessed and multiplied Abraham and Sarah. No matter how desperate the situation looks for the nation as a whole, their God is able to deliver them and will fulfill the promised covenant blessings to Abraham.

Is. 51:3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

This verse definitely takes us into the prophetic future. Zion/Israel has never been in a position comparable to the Garden of Eden since the time of Isaiah. The new nation of Israel (since 1948) has made great inroads agriculturally, but could certainly not be compared to the Garden of Eden. Not only will the land produce abundantly, but also the people will also be filled with joy and thanksgiving. This is not a description that fits the land as a whole today. They still have much to fear from their enemies and have great disagreement among themselves as to how to deal with these enemies.

The time is coming when YHWH is going to take pity on His people and His land. He will be the source of their blessing; He will be the source of their joy and gladness. He will be the One to whom they give their thanks in praise and

worship. The land of Israel today is basically a secular nation; they do not recognize God as LORD or act as a nation with a mandate from YHWH.

Is. 51:4 Harken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

“my people.....my nation” – God has set apart the nation of Israel as His. That calling will not change no matter how rebellious they may be.

Romans 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

I am reminded that in verse 1 He makes it clear that He is talking to the godly remnant of the nation. He will accomplish His purposes for the nation of Israel. He had already given them His law as recorded in scripture, and the choice was theirs to obey or not. There is a time coming in the future when Jesus will rule as the King of kings from Jerusalem and His judgment will be final for not only the nation of Israel, but also for all peoples. At that time, He will enforce His law in righteous judgment against those who disobey. The Hebrew for *light* makes reference to happiness. The fact that He is a righteous Judge will bring happiness to those in His kingdom.

Is. 51:5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

“salvation” = liberty, deliverance, prosperity, to be open, wide or free, to be safe

Again, the language speaks to me of a time yet future—a time when the Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God, is on the throne as King. At that time the nation of Israel will experience the blessings of deliverance, prosperity and safety. The Hebrew for the word *arm* is indicative of power and strength. In other words, the King will rule with authority and with the ability to enforce what He commands. Even the Gentile nations will “wait” upon the Lord. The Hebrew for *wait* stated to “bind together, collect, expect.” This seems to indicate a sense of union submissive to one authority with certain expectations of that authority. That expectation seems to be the privilege of trusting in the strength and power of the King for their own good.

Is. 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the 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 shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

This verse takes us on into the future beyond the millennial kingdom of the Messiah according to the book of Revelation.

The sequence of events indicated is as follows (cf Revelation 20-21:1):

- Satan is bound in hell for 1000 years.
- Christ rules on earth on the throne of David for said 1000 years.
- At the end of the 1000 years Satan is released to work his deceit once more, and he will be able to gather an army “as the sand of the sea.”
- God destroys this army with fire from heaven and Satan is cast into the lake of fire.
- The Great White Throne Judgment takes place at which time all those who have rejected Jesus will be judged according to their works.
- All not found in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire.
- **Then appears a new heaven and earth.**

The Apostle Peter also had some words to say about the new heavens and earth.

2Peter 3:10-13 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

It's hard not to get hung up on the phrase “the day of the Lord” in this passage. This phrase is so closely associated with the time of Jacob's trouble, the 7 years of tribulation, that it can be confusing.

I decided to stop and look at a list of all the verses that contain this phrase. The Greek for the word *day* can be specific or represent an indefinite period of time. As I thought about this list, the thought entered my mind that maybe this is a reference to the final part of that “day” of judgment. Just as prophecies about the two comings of the Messiah were spoken of by the prophets as “one” event, the same truth could be applicable to the prophecies of the “day of the Lord” regarding the new heavens and earth. That totally removes the difficulties that jump out at me as I try to resolve the seeming differences regarding this time in the passages that reference it.

Creation was cursed along with the man for whom it was created when man chose to reject God as LORD. Isaiah compares the aging of man to the deterioration of the creation. Both Isaiah and Peter reference the use of fire. Isaiah states that the heavens will vanish like smoke, and Peter states that the heavens and earth will be dissolved due to the intensity of the heat.

The important point to make is that those who have placed their trust in YHWH will be saved forever, time without end. For God's salvation to be forever, God is understood as existing forever, which in turn includes His righteousness (and holiness, and love, etc).

Is. 51:7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart *is* my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

Is. 51:8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

I am reminded again that the Spirit is using the prophet Isaiah to deliver His message—the prophet who writes poetically, which in Hebrew involves repetition. These two verses are basically repeating the truths previously stated.

The LORD is talking to those who can understand and discern righteousness and who have God's law in their hearts. He is reminding these godly people that they have nothing to fear from men. Wicked men are going to die (physically and spiritually) and be destroyed. Those who place their faith in YHWH can be sure that God will never change. His salvation is sure for all who place their faith in Him in all future generations; they may die physically, but they can look forward to glorious eternal life in a resurrected body in the presence of God.

Is. 51:9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?

Is. 51:10 *Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

As I read the wording in these verses a few times, it seems that the speaker must be Isaiah. He is getting excited about the message he is delivering. He wants the LORD to exert the power and authority He has been speaking about in the previous verses "now." Isaiah is reminded of the times that the LORD had demonstrated that power in the early beginnings of the nation. According to the Hebrew, Rahab is a reference to Egypt, which he proceeds to compare to a dragon (monster). Verse 10 continues the thought by referencing the parting of the Red Sea to allow the Jews to escape from the Pharaoh and his armies.

I can empathize with Isaiah. He is eager for the time of blessing about which he is prophesying. I am eager for the time of blessing about which I am studying. You can't help but get excited to think about Jesus ruling on the throne with total righteousness and the creation experiencing healing that will make the land fruitful and its inhabitants, both man and animal, live in harmony with one another. The animals won't be in question, but man will still have a sin nature and the choice to obey or not—the key difference being, sin will be dealt with immediately. Scripture tells us He will rule with a rod of iron.

Psalm 2:9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Is. 51:11 Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

The prophet knows that when the LORD is on the throne, “the redeemed of the LORD,” specifically the Jewish people, will be eager to come home to their land. They will want to exult with joy in their place of blessing and privilege. It will be a time of joy such as the nation has never experienced before. Sorrow and mourning will no longer be synonymous with the Jew.

Is. 51:12 I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man *that* shall die, and of the son of man *which* shall be made as grass;

Is. 51:13 And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where *is* the fury of the oppressor?

The LORD is definitely the speaker again in these verses. The Hebrew for the word *comforteth* includes not only pity and consolation, but “to avenge.” Part of the comforting process for the nation of Israel will be the fact that God will take vengeance on their enemies for the way they have been mistreated. God is the One who has exacted punishment upon His people, but the nations have gone far beyond what God intended and He will take vengeance. He is the only One with the right to do so.

Psalm 94:1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

The LORD is stating the obvious. He had promised the nation blessing beyond measure in return for their obedience. He had proven His power and authority through many miraculous events. They had chosen to reject the God Whom they should have served in fear and obedience. They showed more fear of their human enemies than they did of God Almighty—the Creator.

The last half of verse 13 was a bit difficult. After reading through several translations and a few commentaries, I think I have a glimmer. The obvious part is that the LORD is making a huge contrast between Himself and the enemies they fear “continually every day.” A human enemy will, at worst, only be able to exert his terror for a limited time. If Israel would but look at her past, she would see that her enemies of the past have not been able to maintain a position of strength and authority. God’s position of strength and authority has not diminished in any way; He is ever in control. Any current or future enemy will have limited times of rulership. If they would but trust in God and serve Him in truth with all their heart, they would have nothing to fear from these enemies. That was His promise.

Deuteronomy 7:11-18 Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come

to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swore unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee. If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt...

Is. 51:14 *The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.*

Another hard verse, and another time I wish I knew Hebrew. Many of the translations make this a statement of limited captivity and future provision as stated in the NAS: *The exile will soon be set free, and will not die in the dungeon, nor will his bread be lacking.*

This makes sense in connection to the preceding verse. That being the case, I have to remind myself to read it from the perspective of the speaker—the LORD. Calvin states it like this, “Yet with good reason does God say that that event will come quickly which he delays till a fit season; for, although to us it may appear to be long, yet, being appropriate and suitable, the time is short.”

Probably the most important point to take from this verse is that God never intends to abandon His people or give up on them. He will punish according to His righteous judgment, but He always allows for repentance and return to Him.

Is. 51:15 *But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name.*

This is one of the characteristics of the book of Isaiah that so impresses me. God continues to confirm Who He IS. He expresses Himself totally and unequivocally as THE GOD.

This is another reminder of His deliverance of Israel from Egypt through the parting of the Red Sea. The “waves roaring” I believe is a reference to the waters crashing back together in destruction of the Pharaoh’s army. Only one being is possessed of that kind of authority and power—YHWH, the LORD of hosts, the greatest army of all.

Is. 51:16 *And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.*

YHWH is the speaker. He has put His words in “thy” mouth—Is this Isaiah, Messiah or the people of Israel in general. I decided to search “put my words,” and interestingly enough they were found in only two other places.

Deuteronomy 18:18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

Jeremiah 1:9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

The verse in Deuteronomy would seem to be a reference to the Messiah, and the verse in Jeremiah references Jeremiah, both of whom reference all the prophets (in old and new testaments) through whom YHWH has spoken to His people.

“covered thee...hand” – There is no safer covering than that provided by the LORD—even if just His shadow. This is a statement of love—of protection, provision and needed correction.

Again, the last half of the verse is difficult for me. My first thought is that it is a statement of God’s purposes from before the foundation of the world. He knew ALL before He ever created. (Which brings up a whole other set of questions I can’t even begin to answer, but doesn’t change the truth of this statement.) The people of Israel and Jerusalem were set apart as God’s chosen people and land before He created the first thing.

A couple of translations, such as the NIV, state it as an identifier of the Lord as the One from whom the message comes — *“I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, and who say to Zion, ‘You are my people.’”*

The Complete Jewish Bible gives rise to some interesting thoughts by its translation — *“in order to plant the skies [anew],
lay the foundations of the earth [anew]
and say to Tziyon, ‘You are my people.’”*

This would tie in to verse 6 above regarding the destruction of the heavens and earth, which in turn references the new heavens and earth spoken about in other parts of His word.

Obviously, there is much to consider. I am reminded of the following verse in Romans.

Romans 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

I believe there are many layers of meanings to God’s Word, and the future may prove all of these ideas to have merit.

Is. 51:17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung *them* out.

Is. 51:18 *There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up.*

I had to read through to the end of the chapter again to get some understanding. “Dregs” reference the residue left from the making of the wine. Isaiah is painting a word picture of a people who are exhibiting the signs of drunkenness in response to God’s judgment of their sin. They have experienced God’s wrath to the full. There are no spiritual leaders left to give her direction according to the Word of God.

Again, this takes my thoughts past the time of Christ, especially since the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and certainly since the reign of the Ottoman Empire.

Is. 51:19 *These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?*

Though making a reference to two things, the prophet goes on to list four. JFB gave insight regarding this discrepancy. The pairs are representative of judgment on the land and on the people. The land will experience desolation and destruction, and the people will experience famine and the sword.

The wording tells me that this judgment is certain. The people cannot expect relief until God’s purposes have been fulfilled.

Is. 51:20 *Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God.*

This is a picture of helplessness. The people have experienced God’s wrath and punishment in its fullness.

Again, that has not happened as of yet. God’s wrath will finally be expended and His refining judgment of the nation of Israel completed at the end of the 70th week of Daniel, the time of Jacob’s trouble, the 7 years of tribulation.

Is. 51:21 *Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine:*

Emphasis is made that their weakness and the lack direction is not a result of the intoxication of wine; it is a lack of spiritual leadership and discernment. Implied—it is a direct result of their disobedience to and rejection of YHWH as their LORD.

Is. 51:22 Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God *that* pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, *even* the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again:

Is. 51:23 But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

“thy Lord the LORD” – YHWH is the Lord/Master of Israel. He has called them to a special purpose and place of privilege, and His purposes will be accomplished. They may rebel and reject Him for a while, but He is always preserving a remnant. One day “all Israel shall be saved.” (Romans 11:26)

Not only is He the God of Israel, He is God Almighty over all of creation.

“pleadeth” – toss, grapple, defend, rebuke, strive thoroughly

There seems to be more than one truth here. God does defend His people as several translations state. He is also striving (endeavoring with earnestness) with His people to get them to turn to Him in repentance and faith. Part of that process includes rebuking them for their sin through punishment.

“thou shalt no more drink it again” – This will only be true of Israel at the end of the tribulation. The enemies of God’s people will experience His wrath and judgment to the full.