

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 55:6-13, SEEK AND CALL

In these verses, God is repeating His call to come to Him and be saved, but the result will be not just justification salvation but a transformed life. This is true for both Jew and Gentile.

Isaiah 55:6-7 <sup>6</sup>Seek [דַּרַשׁ] the LORD while He may be found; Call [קְרָא] upon Him while He is near. <sup>7</sup>Let the wicked [רָשָׁע] forsake [עָזַב] his way [דַּרְוֵהוּ] And the unrighteous [אֲוִיִּן] man his thoughts [מִדְּשָׁבְהוֹ]; And let him return [שׁוּב] to the LORD, And He will have compassion [רַחֵם] on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly [רַבָּה] pardon [סְלַח].

Seek, דַּרַשׁ, means to resort to, to seek, inquire, examine, or find out referring to learning information not previously known. This word is an imperative verb, a command to seek out Yahweh.

Some theologians overstate the case in terms of lost mankind's ability to seek God out. "To seek is, as ever in religious usage, not to look for something lost but to come with diligence to where the Lord is to be found. It speaks, therefore, of commitment, determination, persistence in spiritual concern and in longing for the Lord's presence and fellowship" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 345]. Really? Lost people do not possess these characteristics. But they can either respond to God's drawing ministry on their lives, and/or they can get desperate in their lost and hopeless state and cry out to God, and then He responds to them and finds them where they are at that moment. They do not, by their effort, find Him. When they respond to the light in whatever fashion and in whatever miniscule way, God responds with more light. That is all very consistent with the grace message being revealed here that says come and receive food and drink without cost and without money and receive God's compassion and pardon.

The positive in terms of seeking out God is that everyone knows Him. He is plainly revealed in creation, and He has placed the knowledge of Him into the mind of every person so that they may respond to His call. The negative in terms of seeking out God is that everyone is busy suppressing the knowledge of Him in unrighteousness. In this context, calling for and seeking God relate to God's presence and the salvation found in Him. This is not a Scripture about curious people simply seeking information, and it is not about lost people exhibiting any commendable characteristics that cause them to diligently search for Him. They grope around as Paul put it (Acts 17:27) and once they begin to grope, they begin to receive some light. If they keep groping, they keep receiving more light until they are eventually face-to-face with making a decision about faith. But groping is only in response to the drawing ministry of God.

Romans 1:18–23 <sup>18</sup>For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup>because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature,

have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup>For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup>Professing to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

What happens then, is that people are turned over to “the lusts of their hearts” (Rom. 1:24), and they are given over to their “depraved mind” (Rom. 1:28). As time goes on, these things make it more and more difficult for people to respond to God's drawing ministry (John 6:44, 12:32, 16:8), and the older they get the harder it is to respond. That is why most people become believers while young and why fewer and fewer people respond to God's call to seek Him out and to call on Him as they get older. Many people do seek out and call on God, but many more do not. The saved flock is a little flock! The problem is that every individual will be held accountable for responding to the call of God by seeking Him out and calling on Him.

Call, קָרָא, means to cry out, to call, to summon referring to calling a person to come into one's presence or give a task. In this context, people are to call on Yahweh to come into their presence as the One who bids them to come to Him and obtain food and drink without money and without cost.

The grammar here is interesting. The text literally reads, “Seek Yahweh while He is letting Himself be found ...” This reveals that there is a finite period of time to seek and call out to Yahweh for the purpose of justification salvation, that is, to purchase the food and drink without money and without cost

Isaiah 55:6 <sup>6</sup>Seek Yahweh while he lets himself be found ... (LEB).

Isaiah 55:6 <sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD while he makes himself available ... (NET Bible).

Call is also an imperative verb; people are commanded to respond to God's drawing ministry. “While He is near” reveals that there will be a time when He will be removed to some degree which will make it more difficult for unsaved people to “call upon Him.” The time is now; no one has any guarantee that he will have tomorrow to do it. This must also be a reference to the Tribulation when God pours out His judgment on an unbelieving world. Apparently, this will be a time when it will be even more difficult for people to come to faith, but it will not be impossible. I don't think Yahweh will ever be unavailable in the sense that no one will be able to be saved at all, but there will be a time characterized by God's judgment and wrath when, for a short period of time, it will be much more difficult. Despite that difficulty, a “multitude” will be saved (Rev. 7:9-17).

“... [T]he action of seeking is probably the stepping to, or simply the coming to Him. This is to take place, however, when God permits Himself to be found (such is the force of the *Niphal* stem [verb form]. Sovereign grace is apparent in these words. God cannot be found at any time but only when He desires to be found” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:380]. Young overstates the case here. We can find God

at any time up to this point in history, but there will come a time, a brief time, when that will be more difficult to do. That time is the Tribulation age.

The Lord declared the time to be saved, which was now—whether in Isaiah's day or during the Lord's First Advent and beyond—when He read Isaiah 61:1 at the beginning of His ministry, but He did not read all of Isaiah 61:2 with it which relates to the Tribulation. That will be an issue dealt with immediately before His Second Advent.

Luke 4:18–19 <sup>18</sup>“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, <sup>19</sup>TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.”

Isaiah 61:2 <sup>2</sup>To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,

“The time to seek and call is now, while God is available and near.... These statements indicate that God is not always available to help, primarily because he hides himself from sinners for a short time when judgment is being enacted on a people. Although God is near to his people when they call on him and he is ever present as a refuge for those who are in trouble, he will not always appear and be near when people are suffering. These two limitations on God's availability argue that one should not let the opportunity to seek God and repent pass by without taking advantage of God's invitation because it may soon be too late and his judgment may come.... Those hearing this invitation from God now need to respond to his gracious offer and draw near to God” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 508].

God is always ready to forgive and welcome a wayward soul into the family of God simply by means of faith. The one who is wicked in his ways and unrighteous in his thoughts, which describes all the unsaved, are welcome to partake, without money and without cost, of the food and drink being freely offered. If the wicked and the unrighteous forsake their ways and return to the Lord, then He will have compassion on them and pardon them.

Wicked and unrighteous are essentially synonyms.

Wicked, רָשָׁע, means wicked, criminal, transgressor, unrighteous, or guilty referring to the wicked and unrighteous person who is in a class of people who are evil, with a focus on the guilt of violating a standard. The sense of the word is about people characterized by wickedness and godlessness. It characterizes someone who is guilty or in the wrong. It describes people who are enemies of God and possibly enemies of His people. The wicked are evil and they do not learn righteousness, but instead commit wicked acts among the righteous. It relates to the guilt incurred for sinning against other people. Righteous people are to avoid wicked people and wicked ways (cf. Barker and Carpenter, s.v. “רָשָׁע,” *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1080).

Unrighteous, אָוֵן, means nothingness, trouble, sorrow, evil or wickedness, and mischief referring to an act (of many kinds) which is morally evil and corrupt and which damages

one's relationship with God and others according to a standard of behavior. "The primary meaning of the word seems to have two facets: a stress on trouble which moves on to wickedness, and an emphasis on emptiness which moves on to idolatry. Generally, theologians have given little attention to *'āwen* as a contributor to an understanding of sin. Since the word stresses the planning and expression of deception and points to the painful aftermath of sin, it should be noted more" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "און," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 23-24]. This word is more appropriately translated as "man of sin" (LEB) or "sinful man" (TANAKH), "man of iniquity" (YLT, LSV), "evil man" (NIV), or "sinful people" (NET Bible) instead of "unrighteous man."

These unsaved people need to forsake their way and their thoughts.

Forsake, *עָזַב*, means to leave or leave behind, reject, forsake, abandon, and let go. "The act of forsaking past ways and thoughts involves the rejection of these behaviors and a decisive break from past beliefs, assumptions, priorities, and plans. Of course it is not always easy to separate instantly from past friends, past ways of doing things, or a past philosophy of life" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 508].

Way, *דֶּרֶךְ*, means conduct referring to a way of life, what is done by behaving in a particular way in the manner in which one conducts one's life as a figurative extension of a thoroughfare.

Thoughts, *מַחְשְׁבָה*, means the content of reasoning and thinking. It may refer to either the thoughts of the mind or to the plans or intentions that flow out of the thoughts of the mind. For the unsaved, these thoughts are only antithetical to God's thoughts.

What they are to do is return to Yahweh, and if they do, He will have compassion on them and pardon them, which is an act on His part that has eternal consequences for those who believe.

Return, *שׁוּב*, means to turn back, to return. In this context, turn back or reject by disconnecting or abandoning an existing association seems to be the best understanding of the way the word is used here. This happens at the moment one places faith in Yahweh by accepting the food and drink He offers without money and without cost which is a metaphor for believing and receiving life in return. This is a request, a desire, a command, even a wish on the part of God for every person. This is not just for some people; this is applicable to every human being, Jew and Gentile. This grammatical construction is why so many translations use "let him" return. The point is that people turn to Yahweh in faith and then they receive His compassion which results in pardon.

Compassion, *רַחֵם*, means to have compassion on, to show mercy, to take pity on, to show love referring to having feelings and actions of kindness and concern for one in difficulty regardless of one's state or guilt for an offense and which is usually based in a relationship or association. This word is in an intense verb form; His compassion is marked by zeal and passion for those who turn to Him in faith. Love is a major element of the meaning of this word. The interesting thing is that God has this incredible love for mankind even in the

face of an overwhelming hatred of Him by mankind in total that is rectified only by means of faith in Him.

John 3:16 <sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 15:13 <sup>13</sup>“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

God’s love for mankind is so great that He loves and blesses mankind in many ways even though the race is nearly united in its opposition to Him and in its rebellion against Him. The only exceptions are found among those who have turned to Him for the food and the drink that comes from Him without money and without cost.

Psalms 147:8 <sup>8</sup>Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who provides rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

Matthew 5:45 <sup>45</sup>so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

Abundantly, רָבָה, means to be multiplied or increased, much, many, great, and numerous. This verb form is causative meaning to cause to increase and to become many. The sense is to cause to change by means of increase in size, i.e., numbers.

Pardon, סָלַח, means to forgive or to pardon referring to removing guilt associated with a moral sin or wrongdoing in connection with ritual or vows. It frees from or releases from something. It is always God who pardons; the verb is used only with God as the subject. It is never used to refer to personal relationships between people; people have problems with truly pardoning one another; therefore, the word does not apply. “So exciting was the openness of this offer of forgiveness that Isaiah (55:7) featured it as the heart of his invitation to salvation. So ready was their Lord to forgive, that Isaiah’s listeners must forget all notions based on the reluctance of men to forgive each other” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “סָלַח,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 626].

This is all made possible by the work of the Suffering Servant whom Isaiah just finished writing about. “When the *wicked* one and the *man of iniquity* turn to the Lord, the thing that they will find is not righteous anger and retributive justice. Instead, they will find compassion and multiplied pardon. How can this be? The position of this chapter subsequent to ch. 53, as well as the marked change in the tone of chs. 54-55 already noted, suggests that it is because of the work of the Servant. It is because ‘his grave was assigned with the wicked’ (53:9), and ‘the Lord has caused to fall on him the iniquity of all of us’ (53:6), that we, wicked and iniquitous though we be, can be treated as though we were righteous (53:12)” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 444].

“And to our God” seems to be a reminder to those who hear or read the prophet that He is their God. It may also be a reminder that He is God and that, as such, He has the desire to be compassionate to sinful men, and He has the power to effectively pardon.

Isaiah 55:8–9 <sup>8</sup>“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup>“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

These verses reveal truth about God in relation to the revelation in verse 7 concerning the wicked and his way and the man of iniquity and his thoughts. God's ways are righteous and just, and God's thoughts are righteous, holy, and true; therefore, mankind, whose ways are wicked and thoughts sinful, needs to adjust to God to the extent that God has made the way clear to do so.

These seem to be intuitively true facts, yet the heart of rebellion against God is the thought that we all are our own god. In light of his rebellious thoughts and sinful ways, mankind delights in making up his own gods as mankind sees fit to do.

Genesis 3:5–6 <sup>5</sup>“For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup>When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

If Adam had not rebelled against God, we still would not be at God's level in terms of thoughts and ways because we are a created being who in no sense possess any aspect of divine attributes, but without question, we would know the truth of these verses. We cannot now recognize our status in relation to Him, because our sin nature does not allow mankind to think that clearly; therefore, man is deluded with visions of grandeur that he does not even remotely possess. We are wholly other than God, and we will never be anything but wholly other than God. The fact is, all we know about God is what God has revealed to us about Him, with the exception of the somewhat limited information we can glean from the fact of the creation itself which is the truth of His power and His divine nature (Rom. 1:18-20). Anything beyond that requires special revelation which God has graciously provided us. It does not tell us everything about Him, but it tells us all He wants us to know. When we consider that the immensity of space is measured in terms of light-years and that we have no idea the boundaries that delineate its extent, we have to recognize that just as those times and distances are so far beyond our comprehension that they are unknowable, so is God so much more beyond our comprehension.

“Man can never fathom the depths and the greatness of God, except to the extent to which He has revealed Himself to him, through His Word, especially through the Incarnate Word, Christ. God is not only omnipotent and all wise, but also full of compassion and forgiveness, when man turns to Him in repentance. In this striking figure the infinite transcendence of God over man is expressed. There just is no comparison between man's thoughts and ways and God's” [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 431].

Isaiah 55:10–11 <sup>10</sup>“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; <sup>11</sup>So will My word be which goes forth from My

mouth; It will not return to Me empty [רִיקָם], Without accomplishing [עֲשֶׂה] what I desire, And without succeeding [צָלַח] in the matter for which I sent it.

The structure here is in the form of a “because” or “thus” statement in verse 10 which has the effect of validating the results presented in verse 11. Because the things of verse 10 take place, so will the things of verse 11 take place. The things of verse 10 are visible to mankind; the things of verse 11 are spiritual, but they will no less take place just as God said they will take place.

In these verses, God uses the principles of general revelation to reveal and authenticate the efficacy of special revelation. The water cycle is the basis for productive agriculture and the resulting sustenance of mankind by means of food production. Beyond that, future generations of productivity are ensured by means of the seed that is produced in order to provide the seed stock for the next growing season. Meanwhile, various food products are available for immediate consumption, for storage to provide food over time, for preservation to last longer and be available at all times for consumption, and for turning them into other products such as bread. Water is also necessary for the maintenance of livestock which are also used for various purposes beyond food such as hides for tents and articles of footwear and clothing. Wool is an important product used for clothing and blankets. So much is dependent on an appropriately operating water cycle that its importance cannot be overstated.

“Come down” and “return” are both imperfect verbs which means incomplete action. That suggests the water cycle of rain and snow, evaporation, and then more rain and snow. The Scripture here is revealing the water cycle (cf. Job 36:27-28), but the results of the precipitation are the most important revelation. The precipitation that the Creator of precipitation sends on the earth does its job to aide in the production of food for the sustenance of His creation, and it is not only mankind that needs water, plants and animals need it as well. “Instead of returning to heaven without having accomplished their intended purposes, they fulfill the purpose for which God sends them. In the rain and snow, falling from heaven, we see the power of God bringing to completion His purposes in nature” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:383].

The truth of this common example of life to which everyone can relate, is meant to verify God's intentions for mankind. He will do what He says He will do in the provision of spiritual sustenance just as He faithfully sustains physical life by sending the precipitation necessary to provide that physical sustenance. Just as precipitation, or the lack thereof, will bring about physical life or death, spiritual sustenance, the Word of God, or the lack thereof in the lives of those who reject it, will bring about eternal, spiritual life or death.

The Lord used this concept early in His ministry which served to show this was a universal truth. It is a revelation of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Deuteronomy 8:3 3“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

Matthew 4:4 'But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

God's Word will accomplish what He desires, and it will succeed for the purpose He sent it. It can do nothing less. God's Word is just that, God's Word, and as such it cannot be anything but truth, and it cannot do anything less than accomplish God's stated purpose. It may not be immediate, but it will happen.

Empty, ריקם, means empty-handed, vainly, empty which pertains to being without anything which is expected in a situation, and so implying a dissatisfaction since an expectation has not been fulfilled. It is generally used to indicate that a person is without something—wealth, sacrifices, gifts, money, and so on.

Accomplish, עָשָׂה, means to cause, to make, to bring about, i.e., to bring about a state or an event. The sense is that of accomplishing something by putting it into effect entirely or thoroughly. It refers to performing an activity with a distinct purpose, a moral obligation, or a goal in mind.

Succeed, צָלַח, means to prosper or to succeed by successfully accomplishing a task or a goal. It is used to mean that something has been caused to be a success.

We are extremely privileged to have the entire canon of Scripture readily available to us. It is worth acknowledging that before the printing press was invented, almost no one had access to the Word of God. Even if there was a copy around somewhere, literacy rates were not very high throughout much of history. God's Word has been deliberately revealed and sent to mankind which implies its preservation. God has revealed exactly what He desired to reveal; nothing more and nothing less, and all of it will be fulfilled as He has planned. God has a plan and a purpose for Israel, for the Church, for mankind, for salvation, for condemnation, for the creation, and for the future Messianic Kingdom, and all of it will come to pass just as His Word has revealed.

"Although myriads will be saved by the Messiah's redemptive sacrifice, before the fulfillment of chapter 55 in the salvation of Israel and the Gentiles at Christ's second advent, the actual realization of verses 12 and 13 awaits that glad millennial day" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1305].

Is it really so simple that people can get something for nothing? Can they really obtain this spiritual food and drink without money and without cost? To this day, people cannot believe that belief in the person and the work of Jesus Christ is sufficient to grant them eternal life. There is something in the heart of sinful man that makes him think that he must do something to work his way into life. "It is logical to question whether the simplicity of 'Come ... Listen ... Come to me ... Seek ... call ... forsake ... turn' can really and effectively make people right with God. But it is not repentance that is effective but the word of divine truth" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 346].

This is all very simple and yet it has profound, eternal significance. God's Word is a divine revelation which is true, righteous, and cannot fail to achieve the purposes for which it

was sent. That was true when Isaiah penned these words, that is true today, and that will be true forever.

Isaiah 55:12-13 <sup>12</sup>“For [בְּיָ] you will go out with joy [שְׂמֵחָה] And be led [יָבֵל] forth with peace [שְׁלֹמִים]; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap *their* hands. <sup>13</sup>“Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up, And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up, And it will be a memorial to the LORD, For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.”

These verses metaphorically use the physical aspects of the creation to picture the joy and the peace the world is going to experience when the Messianic Kingdom finally arrives. Isaiah was, of course, writing to the Israelites for Israel, but this chapter has been about “every one;” (v. 1) therefore, we understand this to be a worldwide, universal truth that has yet to be realized in terms of historical fulfillment. This was not fulfilled when the Israelites returned to the land out of the Babylonian captivity, and it has not been fulfilled since Israel became a nation again in 1948. This is a Messianic Kingdom prophecy.

Too many theologians think this refers to the return from Babylon. “It is used [led] of the returning exiles from Babylonian captivity led by the Lord to Jerusalem” [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. “יָבֵל,” *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 413]. “J. Muilenburg believes this ‘poem closes with the liberation from exile ... He [the prophet] conceives of a new exodus and portrays it in all the glowing imagery of nature,’” ... Muilenburg, ‘*Isaiah 40-66*,’ *IB*, 5:650. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, 194, also views this as an exodus from Babylon, stating that, ‘Israel’s return home will be “Paradise Regained.”’ He connects the growth of trees to “the miraculous fertility of the desert region through which the exiles are to travel.” Childs, *Isaiah 438*, says, “Israel will go forth from Babylon in peace, breaking forth” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 511, 511 n. 587].

This kind of thing makes you wonder whether or not these theologians even read their Bibles? Ezra and Nehemiah reveal that just the opposite of this analysis took place when the Israelites returned from Babylon. The verse here in Isaiah reveals a renewed earth with the curse removed. Since when has that happened? Never! But it will.

The idea that only the return from Babylon is the subject of these verses is very damaging to people who are trying to understand the book of Isaiah and trusting that these well-known theologians are accurately explaining the book in their work. Fortunately, other commentators do recognize the folly of these faulty views and have pointed them out, but even then, not always in an accurate manner.

“Those who delimit the prophet’s reference in these two verses to the return from Babylon are driven to a supposition that is almost ludicrous. They are forced to say that evidently the prophet (Deutero-Isaiah, whose view is limited to his own narrow time span) envisioned the return to be marked by a miraculously transformed nature that would be kept in perpetuity as a kind of memorial to God’s deliverance. If that is correct, then Deutero-Isaiah was the falsest of false prophets, because there were no miracles and they have not been kept inviolate for all eternity” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 448]. Oswalt’s recognition

of the existence of Deutero-Isaiah is itself totally false. One prophet whose name was Isaiah wrote the entire book. It is also true that there will be a “miraculously transformed nature that [will] be kept in perpetuity as a kind of memorial to God’s deliverance;” it just has not happened yet.

Other theologians believe this refers only to redemption, which would be a typical Calvinist understanding of this chapter. This thought gives no credence to the truth that the Messianic Kingdom is in view. “The prophet is not talking about the literal return. It is not even certain that he is speaking about some eschatological time. This is imagery from start to finish, and it is imagery to express the joy of all creation at the possibility of sinners being made holy through the Word of God. To be sure, the return from exile is a part of that work of the Word, but the return only makes any sense in the light of the deeper, greater work. If deliverance from the guilt and the power of sin is not a real possibility, the return is only a mockery of human futility. But if that glorious possibility does exist, then redemption of every type, physical, emotional, and spiritual, is a wonderful reality” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 448].

In his commentary, Oswalt was generally pretty good about recognizing eschatological issues, but he certainly missed it in these verses.

For, כִּי, could have been translated as surely, truly, or indeed; it is a marker of emphasis and used of strengthening a statement. This is going to be the end result for those who take Yahweh up on His offer to buy the food and drink He offers without money and without cost. They will enter into this wonderful Kingdom life in which all the covenant promises will be fulfilled.

The Messianic Kingdom is the subject of these verses. These things will not take place until that point in time in history. People are going to be go out with joy and be led into the Messianic Kingdom with peace. The Kingdom will indeed be a time in history that the world has never before known, and it is going to be beyond amazing!

Joy, שִׂמְחָה, means joy, rejoicing, gladness, delight, or pleasure referring to a feeling or attitude of joyful happiness and cheerfulness. The sense is that of the emotion of great happiness and pleasure. “It refers to the reality, the experience and manifestation of joy and gladness. It refers to a celebration of something with joyful and cheerful activities. It is practically equivalent to the Israelites’ days of feasting and celebrating over their God and His blessings” [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. “שִׂמְחָה,” *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1161].

Zechariah talks about the joy, gladness, and cheerfulness of the feasts that will be held during the Kingdom.

Zechariah 8:19 <sup>19</sup>“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth *months* will become joy, gladness [שִׂמְחָה], and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.’”

Peace, *שלום*, means completeness, peace, soundness, tranquility, and welfare. The emphasis is on a whole life characterized by *shalom*. That whole life situation will only be fully realized in the Messianic Kingdom when the Prince of Peace is ruling over not only His Israelite people, but over the world. The world system as it has operated since the Fall cannot allow the conditions necessary for true *shalom* to flourish, but once the Messianic Kingdom comes into being, that will all change under the leadership of the King who is true peace.

Isaiah 9:6–7 <sup>6</sup>For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. <sup>7</sup>There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

The King Himself will lead both Israel and the world into that peace.

Led, *יָבֵל*, to conduct, to bear along referring to bringing by directing or guiding the movement of an object in a linear direction. This verb is in the causative form referring to taking out of danger. The sense is to be brought, that is, to be taken somewhere with something or somebody. In this case, the Lord will be taking the Israelites into the land promised to them in the Abrahamic Covenant. Isn't this exactly what takes place at the end of the Tribulation?

The metaphor of inanimate created objects expressing shouts of joy and clapping hands is a figurative way of saying that even the creation is going to be set free from the bondage and the damage incurred because of the Fall. We know that the creation was cursed along with Adam, and that will be rectified at this time in history.

Genesis 3:17–18 <sup>17</sup>Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it!'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup>"Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you ...

Romans 8:19–22 <sup>19</sup>For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

The creation's longing will be satisfied once the Lord returns to establish the Messianic Kingdom. The cursed plants, characterized as thorns and nettles, will be removed and replaced by more desirable, more productive plants once the curse is removed.

The language used in these verses is highly symbolic. "Instead of the thorn (thornbush), emblem of the curse of sin (Gen. 3:17-18) and the wicked (2 Sam. 23:6; Micah 7:4), shall come up the fir tree (cypress), symbol of the godly (Ps. 92:12; Is. 60:13). Instead of the brier, emblem of the uncultivation [sic] of Palestine as a result of enemy invasion (Is. 5:6),

shall come up the myrtle tree, a symbol of restored Israel (Zech. 1:8-11)" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1306].

This transformation will be a memorial to the Lord of creation, and it will be an everlasting sign to the people of the world which will be a permanent reminder that the Lord has redeemed man and creation. God said it; God did it; God will be remembered throughout eternity for it. "This transformed world will be 'for the LORD's renown'; his name, his reputation, and his glory will be on display for all to see. This transformed new creation will never be cut off for this new world will be a sign of God's transforming power to redeem it and everyone in it" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 512].