

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 43:14-21, THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON

From Isaiah 43:14 to 44:5, the book presents three short pericopes showcasing Yahweh as the only Savior the world will ever see as Isaiah 43:11 asserted. In the section we are studying today, He is promising to do works of deliverance that surpass the Exodus deliverance. "But Isaiah hastens to add that there will be new evidence [of God's role as Savior in the future as compared with the past] and that the Israelites should not so concentrate on what God has done for them in the past that they cannot see the new things he will do on their behalf" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 152].

The second section will explain the truth that Israel does not deserve the deliverance they are going to experience. God's character and His grace are the foundation for Israel's deliverance. God, who cannot lie, made promises to Israel's patriarchs that must be fulfilled. Finally, God promises the ultimate restoration of Israel upon whom He will pour out His Spirit and who will finally be the people and the nation God created them to be.

Babylon is quite obviously a major factor in understanding biblical prophecy, not only as a world power in ancient Israel's time, but as the type of a forthcoming world power that will arise at the end of days to dominate the entire planet. We've seen both factors at work in the book of Isaiah, i.e., Babylon as a temporal world power in ancient history that also served as a type of the Babylon world power under the leadership of the antichrist at the end of history. Oftentimes, Isaiah abruptly switches from writing about the temporal Babylon to writing about the eschatological Babylon.

The question here is whether or not this Scripture is referring to Babylon's destruction that freed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, or to an eschatological destruction of the Babylonian world system that will result in the return of the Israelites back into the land to enjoy the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom. Or, is the first a type of the second? It could be all of the above. One of the problems with understanding this as the conquest of Babylon by the Medes and the Persians which resulted in the freeing of the Israelites to return to Jerusalem is that Babylon was not destroyed at that time. The Medo-Persians snuck into the city and quickly conquered it without destroying the place. This Scripture seems to be eschatological in nature when not only the city of Babylon, but the Babylonian world system is destroyed, and some of the language used in this context (vv. 19-20) is reminiscent of earlier language in the book that was eschatological in nature. There is no reason to think otherwise here either.

Isaiah 43:14 <sup>14</sup>Thus says the LORD your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "For your sake [למען] I have sent [שָׁלַח] to Babylon, And will bring [יָרֵד] them all down as fugitives [בְּרֵחַ], Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice [רִנָּה].

Babylon is going to be brought low, but it has never been completely destroyed. After the Medes and the Persians conquered the city, they made it a principal city of their nation and it remained an important city after Christ. Beginning in about the second

century A.D., it did become, or at least began to become, a shadow of what it once was, but people have always lived there and agricultural pursuits in the fertile Euphrates River valley have carried on to this day.

“Thus says the Lord” is a signal to pay attention to the important words to follow. The following words are meant to give hope to the Israelites. This hope would have been important to the exiles during the Babylonian captivity, and I presume it will bring hope to the Israelite generation which will experience the judgments of the Tribulation when the Babylonian world system of antichrist will be making life hell on earth.

If this is pertaining to the Babylonian captivity, it will end when the Medo-Persians conquer Babylon and the Persian King Cyrus released the Jews to go back to Jerusalem. At least, he released everyone who wanted to go, but only about 50,000 returned to Israel. The connections to the Exodus that follow this verse suggest a second Exodus is the subject, and that event will not happen until the end of the Tribulation. During that return to the land, all the Jews, not just some of them, will return to Israel to inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom. The return to Israel from Babylon is at least a type of the return to Israel from around the world that has yet to take place.

The reference to the Holy One of Israel has been one of Isaiah's references to Yahweh in connection with His people and nation. The reference to Yahweh your Redeemer is more suggestive of this last half of the book. Both references are personalized to the Israelites, “your Redeemer,” and to Israel the nation, “the Holy One of Israel.” The word Redeemer, גֹּאֲל, represents the concept of the Kinsman Redeemer specifically identified as Christ Jesus later in biblical revelation. He, Yahweh, redeemed Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 6:6) where He formed the Israelites into the nation Israel, and He redeemed Israel in a spiritual sense on the cross. Not only did He redeem Israel on the cross, but He also redeemed mankind; however, here His special and unique relationship with the Israelites is the subject. “The Holy One of Israel” also speaks to His special and unique relationship with the nation and the Israelites. The one, true, Creator God is the God of the world, but He is particularly Israel's God. These two references may be a hint that there is more to Israel's deliverance than physical salvation; spiritual salvation is also needed and it too will be provided.

Due to God's uniquely special relationship with Israel, we know that He has not abandoned Israel and replaced the nation with the church. It is for the sake of the nation that He is acting. Israel may have been set aside for a time as God's revelatory nation of priests to the world and as He subjects Israel to the temporal discipline they have earned for their rebellion against God and for rejecting their Davidic King when He came to them and offered them the Messianic Kingdom, but He has not abandoned them. He is still sovereignly protecting the nation so that Israel will not disappear from the pages of history either as a nation or as a people group of Jews. You can see Him still working with the nation as He is bringing the people back into the land in unbelief in preparation for passing them under the Tribulation rod of judgment (Ezek. 20:33-38) and which will ultimately result in the identification of the believing remnant that will inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom and realize the fulfillment of the covenant promises. At some point, the church will be removed from earth to be with the Lord, and He will return to dealing primarily with Israel.

Sake, לְמַעַן, means on account of, for the sake of. This is personalized specifically as a reference to Israel with the addition of the second person plural pronoun “your,” hence, “for your sake.” The judgment on Babylon will be imposed for the sake of Israel. God is in control of history and no matter how much various nations at various times think they are in charge, nothing will exemplify this rebellious mindset more than the Babylonian world system of the end times. This is all part of God's ongoing work to preserve Israel as a people and as a nation in the furtherance of His mediatorial Kingdom program for history which has yet to be realized and which must come to pass. Whether Israel is faithful or not, and they have yet to be faithful, God is faithful and He will act for Israel's sake as He sees fit to do so.

“Where his unique moral perfection and essence made him one not to be trifled with in chs. 1-39, those same attributes make him uniquely able to save those who call on him in chs. 40-66. Thus the two sections of the book complement each other on the nature of the holiness of God” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 153].

The text does not say who or what will be sent to Babylon to accomplish God's purpose. Sent, שָׁלַח, means to send, to cause to go somewhere. The verb form here is intensive which is often used in connection with sending away. It is also a perfect verb tense which, in this context, is a prophetic perfect referring to some future action. The focus is on God's work, which is certain to come to pass, and not necessarily on the entity used to do His work at His behest.

The text says nothing about freeing the Israelites; it is about making the Chaldeans fugitives. The Chaldeans were the people living around the south end of the Euphrates River in a swampy, delta area. The kings that originally made Babylon an independent power were Chaldeans; therefore, the term “Chaldeans” is used as a reference to or as a synonym for the Babylonians.

Bring down, יָרַד, means to go down, to descend. This is in a causative verb form meaning to cause to travel down, whether in elevation or in a particular direction. It seems to be a reference to sending the Babylonians fleeing down the river as fugitives. The Babylonians have been attacked and defeated by some entity that is working on God's behalf which sends them into flight. Fugitive, בָּרוּחַ, refers to one who is a fugitive and therefore who is fleeing from an uncongenial situation. It is a reference to being in flight from an enemy.

Apparently, the Chaldeans, who lived in the watery, river environment of what is now southern Iraq were proud of their ships; they rejoiced in them. Rejoice, רָנָה, means shouting for joy, a cry of jubilation referring to the utterance of sounds expressing great joy. They will use their ships as a means of escape; whether that is successful or not is not stated. If this is an end times prophecy, they will not be successful; the Lord will be victorious in that final world battle.

This verse does not comport with the situation that happened when Cyrus conquered Babylon. The people in the city did not flee. The conquest was so sudden and so peaceful that many of the citizens of Babylon did not even realize that they had been invaded

until it was too late to do anything about it. One can imagine, however, that many people, Chaldeans included, will try to flee from the judgments of God when the Tribulation is underway and the catastrophic judgments of that time will be under way.

Due to the Euphrates River, Babylon was a port city and freighters plied the waters of the river to the Persian Gulf. It will be a port city of some sort once again during the Tribulation (Rev. 18:9-24).

Yahweh reaffirmed His close, personal relationship with Israel in verse 15.

Isaiah 43:15 <sup>15</sup>“I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King.”

First, He declares that He is Yahweh, the God of the burning bush, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Second, He declares His complete righteousness; He is the Holy One, singular. He is the only completely righteous being in existence. Third, He is the Creator of Israel. Israel is the only specifically God created nation in existence and as such, they enjoy a relationship to God that no other nation has. Fourth, He is the King of Israel, and the Messiah Jesus, the God-man, is ultimately the eternal Davidic King of Israel. Oswalt called this “Old Testament theology in miniature” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 153].

The name of God, Yahweh, emphasizes the fact that He is the covenant keeping God of Israel. The covenants have been made with Israel and not with the church. The church benefits from the covenants by means of the existence of the Jewish people and the blessings clause of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:3). Exodus 6:3 states that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not know Him as Yahweh, but instead as *El Shaddai*, God Almighty. God Almighty has the power to make and keep covenants. The Patriarchs did know that name, but what they did not know was the experience of the meaning of the name as the covenant keeping God because they died before the Abrahamic Covenant began to be fulfilled. “The emphasis of the name YHVH is that this is God’s covenant name; it is the whole manifestation of God in His relationship to Israel” [Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Come and See: What We know About God: Theology Proper*, 27]. The name Yahweh is used in connection with the establishment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3) and its three amplifying covenants: the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:8-16), the Land Covenant (Dt. 29:1, 30:1-10), and the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). All the covenants are to, with, and for Israel, and Yahweh unconditionally established these covenants; therefore, He is the guarantee that all of the covenant stipulations will be completely fulfilled.

The name Yahweh also represents the fact that there is only one true God. He is the Holy One, the only One, and He specifically identifies Himself with Israel. This name belongs to Him; no other God is Yahweh. This is such a serious matter that prohibiting the taking of the name of Yahweh in vain is one of the commands revealed in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:7). The majesty of this name is proclaimed over the whole earth (Ps. 48:10). He is jealous for His name and giving His glory and His praise to no one else including idols.

Isaiah 42:8 <sup>8</sup>"I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, Nor My praise to graven images.

The name is emblematic of the divine attributes of God (Ex. 34:5-7). The attribute that Yahweh Himself used in connection with the name in this verse is holiness.

Leviticus 11:44 <sup>44</sup>"For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy....

Leviticus 19:1-2 <sup>1</sup>Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: <sup>2</sup>"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

The name is also a sign of the hatred that God has for sin.

Exodus 34:5-7 <sup>5</sup>The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; <sup>7</sup>who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

Psalms 11:5 <sup>5</sup>The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates.

Yahweh is also a name that emphasizes God's work of redemption.

Isaiah 53:6, 10 <sup>6</sup>All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.... <sup>10</sup>But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

The Holy One of Israel cannot forget, abandon, destroy or allow to be destroyed the people that He specifically created to be His. He cannot and He will not abrogate the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "God would not deliver His people because of *who* they were but because of *whose* they were. He was Yahweh, who had revealed Himself to them at Sinai and made a covenant with them. He was their Holy One who had showed them how to share in His holiness and so enjoy His fellowship. He was the Creator of Israel who had brought them into existence from nothing. And He was their King who was the true sovereign and father of their nation, who owned them, and to whom they owed their allegiance" [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible: Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:122].

The pagan gods of the world are often referred to as kings, but as we have seen there is only one true King who is not only the King of Israel but He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14, 19:16). Isaiah often related Yahweh to the King of Israel.

The prophet thought he had been ruined because “my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Is. 6:5).

Isaiah 32:1 <sup>1</sup>Behold, a king will reign righteously ...

Isaiah 33:17 <sup>17</sup>Your eyes will see the King in His beauty ...

Isaiah 33:22 <sup>22</sup>... The LORD is our king; He will save us—

Next, there is a comparison presented of Israel's future deliverance from Babylon with Israel's past deliverance that took them out of Egypt. Yahweh delivered them then, and Yahweh will deliver them in the future.

Isaiah 43:16–17 <sup>16</sup>Thus says the LORD, Who makes a way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters, <sup>17</sup>Who brings forth the chariot and the horse, The army and the mighty man (They will lie down together *and* not rise again; They have been quenched *and* extinguished like a wick):

The “way through the sea And a path through the mighty waters” is a reference to the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea by the Exodus generation which was delivered from bondage and death. Conversely, once Israel reached land on the east side of the Red Sea, the Egyptian Army including horses, chariots, and the mighty men of that army were killed by the waters of the Red Sea as they returned to their place which trapped the army in the sea and completely destroyed it. Notice also that it is Yahweh who brought out the Egyptian Army to its destruction just as it was God who rained down destruction on the nation by means of the plagues He used to “persuade” them to let His people go.

Exodus 14:4, 8 <sup>4</sup>“Thus I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will chase after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD.” And they did so.... <sup>8</sup>The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he chased after the sons of Israel as the sons of Israel were going out boldly.

Furthermore, Egypt was never going to rise to world prominence again, and that is exactly what happened. They continued on as a nation and they have an army, but the nation never fully recovered from the destruction of the Exodus plagues to become a world power again. Many people consider Egypt to be a type of the world system. While the destruction of Egypt at the Exodus was not quite total, it will one day be complete and Egypt will be no more just as the world system will be no more.

Young recognized the eschatological nature of these verses although, due to his Amillennial end times theology, he incorrectly limited it to spiritual deliverance and negated the physical deliverance that Israel will enjoy at the end of the Tribulation. “The way in the sea is the path of deliverance through the Red Sea, which this same Lord made for His people at the time of the exodus. The adjective *mighty* calls attention to the power of the waters that stood in the way of the deliverance of God's people. This deliverance forms the background for a consideration of the far greater deliverance God is to accomplish for His people through His servant. It is not a contrast between redemption from Egypt and the deliverance from Babylon, but between the redemption

from Egypt and the redemption that the servant will perform. Inasmuch as God had once done the seemingly impossible in making a path through the sea, so in the future He will deliver His people from the spiritual bondage in which they find themselves. The verse climaxes in the word *path*, which is the symbol of deliverance" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:154].

"Together" and "rise" are both imperfect verbs meaning incomplete, ongoing action, generally referring to the present and on into the future. Once Egypt's army and the mighty man are dead, they will be continually dead never to rise and subjugate Israel again. "Quenched" and "extinguished" are perfect verbs meaning completed action revealing that these deaths are permanent.

Exodus 14:13 <sup>13</sup>But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.

Exodus 4:31, reveals that the Israelites believed in Yahweh after listening to Moses and Aaron and after seeing the signs Yahweh assigned them to do. Exodus 14:31 reveals that the destruction Yahweh wrought on the Egyptians and the power displayed in doing so reinforced the belief the people had in Yahweh. The Exodus generation was a generation of believers.

Exodus 4:31 <sup>31</sup>So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.

Exodus 14:31 <sup>31</sup>When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

It should go without saying that the Exodus is an extremely important event in Israel's history. The Israelites can and should look to the past to inform the future. God was faithful to deliver them in the past just as He said He would, and He will deliver them in the future at a second and final Exodus event that brings the believing remnant back into the land to enjoy the covenant blessings promised them. This cannot and will not take place until the end. From the time Isaiah wrote these words and until today, Israel is still experiencing divine temporal discipline imposed by various entities of the world system that are used by God to do His will. Sometimes the Israelites will experience a level of deliverance that is more and sometimes less, but they will always experience divine protection to some degree so that the nation will never be completely destroyed. While the Israelites are being physically protected against annihilation today, they are, for the most part, still spiritually dead and in need of that final deliverance that will not occur until the end. True, total deliverance for the remnant, awaits the climax of world history as we know it. We simply cannot say that this Scripture is promising them perpetual deliverance from danger such as was experienced at the Red Sea, but we can say that will happen at the end of the Tribulation when Israel finally accepts the Messiah King and enters the Messianic Kingdom.

While the Israelites are to remember what Yahweh did for them in the past which should bolster their confidence for the future, He does not want them to dwell on those things either. What they need to do is to look to the future, which is informed by the past but not bound to it, because there is more to come in His dealing with the nation.

Isaiah 43:18 <sup>18</sup>“Do not call to mind the former things, Or ponder things of the past.

Many people consider that the events of the Exodus are the most significant events in the history of Israel, but there are greater things than the first Exodus in store.

Jeremiah 16:14–15 <sup>14</sup>“Therefore behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ <sup>15</sup>but, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.’ For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.

Many people think that what God has done in the past locks Him into a pattern of activity from which He cannot deviate. This is particularly a theological problem in Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Word of Faith theological systems. They use Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever,” as the basis for that claim, but that is a faulty understanding of that Scripture which is referring to His attributes, not to His actions. He can and does deal in history and with mankind in various ways at various times in various places, and that is the point of this verse. The Exodus represents the way that He formed the tribes of Israel into the nation Israel, brought them out of slavery as the nation, and took them into Canaan forming the geographical boundaries of the nation. There will be a second Exodus when He brings the believing remnant back into the land at the end of the Tribulation, but it will be much different and it will be worldwide in scope which is something that has never been done before. There is no pattern for His activity and his work that He must follow. He can do whatever He sees fit to do, consistent with His divine attributes, whenever, wherever, and however He sees fit to do it. “Isaiah derives his pictures from the Red Sea event and from the wonders of that earlier wilderness journey, but he issues an important reminder: the past can teach and illustrate but it must not bind. The Lord always has greater things in store; he is revealed in the past, but he is always more than the past revealed” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 271].

Oswalt related the human habit of pigeon-holing God into a pigeon hole of their own making with idolatry, that is, with making God a God who does things the way they think He should do things. One way that people do that is by thinking that God must do things the same way at all times in all places which is what idols are perceived to do in concert with the rhythms of nature from season to season. “Surely Isaiah, one of the prophets who most stresses Israel’s past, could not mean that God’s redemptive acts and all the revelations connected with them should be forgotten. When we look again at the introduction we can see the point he is driving at. We humans are inveterate idolaters. We turn everything into a fetish if we are allowed to do so. So for Israel, the glorious, saving events of the past with all their details had become a straitjacket into which every other act of God was forced. As a result the Israelites were frequently unable to recognize God’s new actions when they came (John 1:11). To all of that Isaiah says, ‘Remember

God, that he is the sort who can do all those kinds of things, but forget the ways in which he did them!' Why? Because he is the Creator; he does not need to do things the same way twice. He is not an idol, doomed to perform the same activities over and over again as nature does. Of course he is consistent, which is the point of vv. 16-17, but his methods can always be new, and if we make an idol of the methods, we damn the very thing we should be blessing" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 154-155].

God's past actions do, in fact, prove that He is trustworthy and can be believed; therefore, the future He has promised is certain to come to pass. He will do exactly what He says He will do. His personal attributes allow for nothing less. The word "behold" is used to bring attention to the revelation to follow.

Isaiah 43:19–20 <sup>19</sup>"Behold, I will do something new [שִׁדְרָה], Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the desert. <sup>20</sup>"The beasts of the field will glorify Me, The jackals and the ostriches, Because I have given waters in the wilderness And rivers in the desert, To give drink to My chosen people.

The Israelites did not have to have a new road constructed to get them through the wilderness, and they did not need rivers in the desert to make the journey back to Jerusalem from Babylon. There were well known and well-traveled routes already established between Babylon and Jerusalem at the time of the Israelites' return from Mesopotamia; they did not need miraculous help to return. They will need that help at the end of the Tribulation when the believing remnant returns from all over a nearly destroyed earth to enter the Messianic Kingdom.

The future involves God doing a new thing. If this pericope has not been eschatological in nature all along, which I think it is, it certainly is in the next three verses. "Spring forth" suggests something that suddenly happens and when it happens, the Israelites will be acutely aware of what is going on. Many theologians want to relate this Scripture to the return from the Babylonian captivity and refer to it as a second Exodus (cf. Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible: Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 122], but the facts do not fit that event. What God will be doing at this time is something new which suggests something quite different from the return from Babylon. New, שִׁדְרָה, means new or fresh referring to having relatively and recently come into being or been made, acquired, or discovered. The Exodus was a type of this second Exodus, but the second one, as we saw in the Jeremiah Scripture, is much grander in scale and not exactly like the first one; it is worldwide, it will be completed in faith, it will begin the Messianic Kingdom, and it will be the final return to the land the Israelites will ever have to make.

Smith recognized the eschatological nature of Isaiah 43:18-21 as opposed to Scripture concerning the return from the Babylonian captivity. "Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 135, relates these new things to the Persian power over Babylon and the return of the Israelites through the dry desert back to Judah. Although this was a great deed of divine deliverance, the text does not specify those events. It seems more appropriate to understand 43:18-21 as describing eschatological conditions in the distant future, not the

return from exile in the near future" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 210, n. 422].

The concepts of a roadway in the wilderness (cf. Is. 35:8, 40:3) and rivers in the desert, which suggests plant life on what is now inhospitable land (cf. Is. 35:1, 41:18), are eschatological markers for end times prophecy which we have previously noted in the book of Isaiah. Even the animals will be glorifying God at that time. The way will be made for the Israelites, specifically the believing remnant, to return to Israel which will then be a land of blessing, both material, temporal blessings as well as spiritual blessings.

"In that new eschatological era God will care for his people by preparing the way before them, just as he guided his people as they traveled through the desert after they left Egypt. This passage says nothing about 'returning' to the 'land of Israel' by 'exiles,' instead it emphasizes the reversal of the covenant curses on the land (Deut 27-28) and God's provision of life-giving water. God's transformation of life will include more than just a new physical environment; it will also have great spiritual significance" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 210].

The next verse says that Israel will declare Yahweh's praise. The question is, declare it to whom? They will declare their praise before and to Yahweh, but once this takes place, the people God created will finally, after nearly 3,000 years, declare God's praise to the world.

Isaiah 43:21 <sup>21</sup>"The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.

Yahweh formed the Israelites for Himself, for His purposes. "[T]he Israelite people were created, formed, and chosen to be witnesses, those who would experience the redeeming love of a holy Creator and could declare that message to a world that had lost the capacity to recognize him" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 155-156].

Exodus 19:5-6 <sup>5</sup>'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup>and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' ..."

As Yahweh's priests, the nation was responsible for being the vehicle of special revelation to the world. That mission has been accomplished to a limited extent, the Scriptures were penned by the Jews and the Jews have been entrusted with their care (Rom. 3:2), but the Israelites have never been the complete revelatory conduit to the world they were created to be. That will change when the eschatological conditions described in these verses come to pass. When Israel is finally, completely, and enthusiastically proclaiming God's praise, the world will take notice (Zech. 8:13, 20-23).

Zephaniah described this praise and indicated that it will go out to all the earth.

Zephaniah 3:14-20 <sup>14</sup>Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! <sup>15</sup>The LORD has taken away His

judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more. <sup>16</sup>In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: "Do not be afraid, O Zion; Do not let your hands fall limp. <sup>17</sup>"The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. <sup>18</sup>"I will gather those who grieve about the appointed feasts— They came from you, O Zion; *The reproach of exile* is a burden on them. <sup>19</sup>"Behold, I am going to deal at that time With all your oppressors, I will save the lame And gather the outcast, And I will turn their shame into praise and renown In all the earth. <sup>20</sup>"At that time I will bring you in, Even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will give you renown and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I restore your fortunes before your eyes," Says the LORD.

Peter also addressed the issue that Israel had been appointed to praise God to the world. When declared by a believing nation to an unbelieving world, praise is a revelatory act.

1 Peter 2:9-10 <sup>9</sup>But you are A CHOSEN [choice, YLT] RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup>for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.