

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 106

March 21, 2021



Moses Gets Water Out of the Rock by Jan Havicksz Cir 1660

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah
Message One-Hundred-Six
THE LORD IS GREATEST OF ALL
March 21, 2021
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Isaiah 44:21–27

²¹Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. ²²I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. ²³Sing, O ye heavens, for Jehovah hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel.

²⁴Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am Jehovah, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth (who is with me?); ²⁵that frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; ²⁶that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof; ²⁷that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; (ASV, 1901).

ISRAEL IS GOD'S SERVANT

Isaiah 44:21

²¹Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

Here God is saying to Israel to remember these persons, these idolaters of which He has just spoken of. Spoken. Additionally, of the gross idolatries they were guilty of, which the Israelites should hate them, shun and avoid them. They also should not imitate them, and do the same thing. He reminds them that this was formerly done by them when they were in Egypt. Instead turn and admire the grace of God, distinguishing it clearly from idols to serve Him. As He says to Israel, *for thou art my servant: I have formed thee;* and therefore should serve the Lord, and Him only, and not idols, for no man can serve two masters; moreover, these were formed by the Spirit and grace of God in regeneration for His service, and therefore ought faithfully and thankfully abide in Him, and never serve any other: *O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me;* such as remember the Lord, and remember to serve Him, He will remember, and not forget them, His love to them, His covenant with them, and the promises He has made them; He will not forget their persons, nor their obedience to Him.

IN FORGIVENESS GOD FORGETS SINS

Isaiah 44:22

²²I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee (ASV, 1901).

God compares Israel's sins and transgressions to *clouds*. There are several characteristics of clouds that compare their sins to them. First there a large number of them. So, He sees them as being as many as the clouds of the air. Additionally, He sees that they cover the heavens and keep the people of the earth from seeing into heaven and realizing the magnitude of His creation. One aspect of clouds is that they cause darkness. Because of this they block the light of God's countenance, and intercede between God and the souls of men, which will cause Him to hide His face from them. So essentially the clouds in effect come between the people and the sun of righteousness, and cover Him out of their sight. Which when they do the light (awareness) and comfort of the Holy Spirit are withdrawn; and they hinder the transmission of prayer to God. God graciously forgives them, which is meant by *blotting* them out. Clouds are blotted out either by the wind dissipating and scattering them, or by the sun breaking through them, and dispersing them. In this illustration He is in effect saying to them, your sins, though many, are forgiven you, and they are so blotted out and removed as to be seen no more, and as if they had never been, as a cloud is, not any more seen when the weather changes and removes them. In a similar manner divine justice, is removed from them as not to be seen by them.

PERSONIFICATION OF NATURE EXPRESSING JOYFULNESS

Isaiah 44:23

²³Sing, O ye heavens, for Jehovah hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for Jehovah hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel (ASV, 1901).

The text here describes the level of universal joy which the deliverance of God's people should bring along with it. The figure of speech used here is personification. It attributes human or God's characteristics to inanimate objects. *Sing, O ye heavens!* This demonstrates the level of appreciation God has for repentance in that the whole creation shall have cause for joy and rejoicing in the redemption of God's people as He then forgives them. In repentance and forgiveness, the central attribute is that we are rescued from the curse which the sin of man brought upon the earth in the garden of Eden and that it is again assured that though now it groans, being burdened, it shall at last be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Many specific events have been given these expressions in a personification manner. The greatest establishment of the world is the kingdom of God in it, Psalm. 96:11–13; 98:7–9. That the angels shall rejoice in it, and the inhabitants of the upper world. The heavens shall sing, for the Lord has done it. And there is joy in heaven when God and man are reconciled (Luke 15:7), joy when Babylon falls, (Revelation 18:20). The *lower parts of the earth*, the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel. When the Lord was approaching Jerusalem in His triumphal entry on the week before His crucifixion, He talked about the stones crying out using

the technique of personification to express the magnitude and importance of the Gospel message that would be launched at His crucifixion in one week from this event.

Luke 19:36–39

³⁶ And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. ³⁷ And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; ³⁸ saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. ⁴⁰ And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out (KJV).

GOD THE CREATOR OF ALL

Isaiah 44:24

²⁴ Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am Jehovah, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth (who is with me?) (ASV, 1901);

God is asserting His right to say what He is expressing to Israel by virtue of the fact the He created the world the heavens and all that are in them. The creation He spoke into existence is “the expanse,” also translated in Genesis as “firmament.” We would say the “sky” or “atmosphere.” The important concept for us to grasp in this verse is that God is “speaking” into existence the expanse, or in Hebrew the *rakeeah*. This Hebrew word *rakeeah* means, “to spread out” or “stretch.” Other places in Scripture where this same expression is used are:

- He alone stretches out the heavens (Job 9:8).
- The heavens are stretched out like a tent curtain (Psalm 104:2).
- God stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in (Isaiah 40:22).
- The Lord has stretched out the heavens (Jeremiah 10:12).
- God stretched out the heavens (Zechariah 12:1).

These usages of the Hebrew word for “stretch” (*rakeeah*) are not quaint, poetic hyperbole or exaggerations. They describe the properties of the heavens that we cannot see, or fully understand. Space is not an empty vacuum. We have difficulty defining space, and understanding the concept of the properties of space. Scripture gives us some insight as to some of its properties:

- It can be torn (Isaiah 64:1).
- It can be worn out like a garment (Psalm 102:25).
- It can be shaken (Hebrews 12:26; Haggai 2:6; Isaiah 13:13).
- It can be burnt up (2 Peter 3:12).
- It can be split apart like a scroll (Revelation 6:14).

- It can be rolled up like a mantle (Hebrews 1:12) or scroll (Isaiah 34:4).

Clearly, God has given us multiple characteristics of what we cannot see.

2 Corinthians 4:18

¹⁸while we look not at the things, which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things, which are, seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (KJV)

In other words, our hearts and expectations should be on eternity because we will not stay here very long. We must have the heavenly view of life that Christ spoke about (Matthew 18:8; 19:17; Mark 9:43, 45).

The atmospheric heaven is the vault of the heavens. It is the expanse that divided the waters above from the waters below. God called this “*heaven*” for the first time in Genesis 1:8, thus it is the “*first heaven*.” This is the earth’s atmosphere, which we breathe. It is the gaseous layer that covers the earth.

One of the reasons for making the stars in the heavens was for “*signs*.” A “*sign*” signifies or represents something. “*Signs*” therefore are meant to lead one to something else. The “*sign*” itself is not the end destination, but is the method employed to direct our attention to something else. In the stars, God is the direct object to which the “*signs*” point. We should realize that His entire visible creation, which theologians call “*general revelation*,” speak of Him, and is coming from Him. In fact, God charges all mankind to know Him through the “*signs*” He has provided. God is trying to tell us things about Himself through the stars in the heavens. The heavens declare His creative output:

Psalm 19:1–6

*¹The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork.
²Day unto day uttereth speech, And night unto night showeth knowledge. ³There is no speech nor language; Their voice is not heard. ⁴Their line is gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, ⁵Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course. ⁶His going forth is from the end of the heavens, And his circuit unto the ends of it; And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof (ASV, 1901).*

This psalm of David announces that “*the heavens declare the glory*,” or splendor, of God’s handiwork. Verse one in Psalm 19 is a summary statement, and states that the majestic Creation is evidence of the even more majestic Creator-God. Every day and every night, “*the heavens*,” continually displays the fact that there is a Creator. Even though Creation does not speak audibly, as humans do, its message goes out for all the earth to witness. The message about the glory of God evident in nature reaches all nations. It is a universal language. He wants us to know and acknowledge Him through these “*signs*”:

Isaiah 40:26

²⁶Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking. (ASV, 1901)

God wants us to see Him *through* these stars. He is not in the stars, as some would believe. He created them and He wants us to realize just how powerful He is. God, who cannot be compared to anyone or anything. He sustains and knows everything about His creation. Here in Isaiah chapters 40–66, God is revealed as the Creator and Maker. He does not want us to worship the stars, which is the practice of astrology, rather He wants us to worship Him (Isaiah 47:13–14; Deuteronomy 4:19; 17:2–5; Isaiah 47:13–14). In His strength He created, controls, and sustains millions upon millions of stars, each one of which He amazingly has named. The psalmist tells us God has provided names for the stars, as well as knowing exactly how many there are. By this, He is clearly demonstrating His sovereign control over His creation:

Psalm 147:4

⁴He counteth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names. (ASV, 1901)

Since God has created the heavens and the stars as signs pointing to Him, it should not be surprising that Satan has corrupted the interpretation of that part of creation, as he tries to do with everything God created. Satan has corrupted their message for his occultic purposes, which is very far from the original truth.

The Hebrew word for the “constellations” is *mazzaroth*. We read the first appearance of the word in Job chapter 38, during God’s discussion with Job.: The horoscope is a corruption of the *mazzaroth* which is now in a corrupt form the Zodiac. God uses the constellations as an example of His power in order to demonstrate Job’s weakness as a man

Job 38:31–33

³¹Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades, Or loose the bands of Orion? ³²Canst thou lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season? Or canst thou guide the Bear with her train? ³³Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? Canst thou establish the dominion thereof in the earth? (ASV, 1901, underlining added)

Job 9:7–9 (Job speaking of God)

⁷That commandeth the sun, and it rise not, And sealeth up the stars; ⁸That alone stretcheth out the heavens, And treadeth upon the waves of the sea; ⁹That maketh the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, And the chambers of the south; (ASV, 1901)

Job is the oldest book in the world. It was probably written during the period of the patriarchs who lived at the time of the book of Genesis. It clearly shows by that time God had named the

constellations. The “Zodiac” of astrology was originally the Mazzaroth of Job chapter 38. The signs of the Mazzaroth are not figures in the sky. They are actually a set of stars with names that represent the figure they describe. Satan, who will use any circumstance to corrupt what God is doing, corrupted the Mazzaroth into the Zodiac. We are not to follow the Zodiac, or its perverse soothsaying, but we are instructed to not be afraid of the message of the stars.

GOD’S PROMISES TO ISRAEL

Isaiah 44:25–27

²⁵that frustrateth the signs of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; ²⁶that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof; ²⁷that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers (ASV, 1901);

God is the One who makes false prophets and the diviners who say they can tell the future look completely foolish. We see the dismal record of the Horoscope, as well as supposedly wise people look foolish in light of God’s prophecies and truth. Those who said God could not release His people from Babylon would be proved false when God’s predictions were fulfilled. Through the prophets, His messengers, He said Jerusalem would again have people living in it.

FALSE PROPHETS ARE RELIGIOUS REBELS

In Ezekiel 20:38 God says “*I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.*” Among the rebels He is referring to are the false prophets, or religious leaders that have led His people astray. When they are confronted they will deny their actions completely (Zechariah 13:5-6).

The laws of the Messianic Theocracy that will be set up in Israel require false prophets to be executed. This is the only way to deal with them to end their pollution, and this is also stated in the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. The only difference between the Mosaic Law and the Messianic Theocracy’s dealing with a false prophet is the manner of execution. The Mosaic Law called for a false prophet to be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 13:5-11). The Messianic Theocracy will have them thrust through with a spear (Zechariah 13:3).

ISRAEL’S RESTORATION IN WRATH

He now begins to tell them of their future after telling the Nation Israel of her past rebellions starting with the four hundred years they were in Egypt. Some of what lies ahead is good, and some of it will be the corrective events they will experience in order finally accept complete belief in their Messiah, the Lord Jesus (Ezekiel 20:33–34).

God says that He will assert His right to rule over in spite of their resistance. First, He will gather them together. *Second*, before He gathers them together, He will bring “*wrath*” upon them. The ten tribes of the Northern Kingdom went into captivity in 722 B.C. The two tribes of the Southern Kingdom went into captivity in 586 B.C. The Nation Israel was completely scattered to multiple countries by the Romans in 70 A.D. after a four-year rebellion. God, through Hosea, affirmed that they would be in a diaspora (Hosea 3:45) and then return to Jerusalem as God promised.

Hosea describes their time out of their land as enduring this period of time without any form of civil government of their own, and they will be subject to the kings and princes of other nations into which God had placed them. During these times the Jews would lose the opportunity to worship in the manner to which they were accustomed. They will one day return to the land, seeking Jehovah, and David will be their king. This is a future reference to the Messianic Kingdom when Christ will rule from David’s throne. The Messiah, who is a descendent of King David, will sit upon David’s throne in fulfillment of God’s promise to him.

Returning to Ezekiel, verse 20: 34b says the Jews will be gathered out of the foreign land “*with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out*”. God is telling the Jews that He will gather them out of all the nations into which He has scattered them, however this gathering will be accompanied with His “*wrath poured out*”.

THE EXAMPLE OF KADESH BARNEA

Ezekiel 20:35-36

³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, saith the Lord Jehovah. (ASV, 1901)

The Lord brought the entire nation out of their Egyptian slavery status in the Exodus about 1445 B.C. He took them to the wilderness in the Sinai Peninsula between Egypt and the Promised Land. There they received the Law of God under Moses their God appointed leader. They were also commanded to build a movable Temple called the Tabernacle. It was also called the “Tent of Meeting.” In the Tabernacle God would meet with them, and His closeness to them would facilitate their ability to keep much of the Law. Their mission was to go into the Promise Land where they would take up residence as God’s Chosen Children, and their close relationship to God would continue.

However, the Children of Israel chose to murmur and rebel against God’s will in a series of events that culminated at Kadesh Barnea. This is located was right on the border of the Promised Land. It was at Kadesh Barnea that God entered the judgment of forty years of wandering because of their continued rebellion. All of the generation who rebelled would die except two people. The two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, and those under the age of twenty would enter and live in the Promised Land. Kadesh Barnea was also the scene of Korah’s rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron (Numbers 16–17). This location would long remain in the memory of the Israelite tribes as the place where their unbelief (caused by following the report of the ten spies

who were afraid to move forward with God's leading) resulted in an additional delay of 38 years before their children could occupy the Promised Land (Psalm 95:8–11; Hebrews 3:7–19).

In verse 34, God is having Ezekiel tell the elders who came into his house that in the future there will be a similar judgment to that which happened at Kadesh Barnea is coming on the Nation Israel. Like the judgment of the Exodus where they entered the Promised Land after wandering for forty years is the historical basis for the text in this section of Scripture. This time God prophesies that His people will be gathered from all over the world out of God's wrath and for God's wrath. It is important to see this distinction as expressed in verses thirty-three and thirty-four.

After suffering the "wrath" of the Nazi Holocaust (where at least six million Jewish people died under Adolph Hitler) there was world-wide sympathy for the Jews that led to the establishment of the Jewish home land Israel in May of 1948. Despite the world-wide sympathy for the Jews that resulted in their returning to their homeland, this gathering is in unbelief. The phrase "*with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out*" means God is going to establish His Messianic Kingdom, but it will entail the wrath and judgment He must pour out to attain it with the Jews. The first gathering out of wrath (the Holocaust) will set the stage for the next judgment and wrath yet future to the Jews.

The following passage in Zephaniah shows God telling the Jews that after gathering them they will be experiencing no shame before a "*decree*" which He will bring upon them. The context of the previous passages in the first chapter of Zephaniah is the Great Tribulation and this passage shows that they are gathered together and unashamed of their sins:

Zephaniah 2:1-2

¹ Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation that has no shame; ² before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of Jehovah come upon you, before the day of Jehovah's anger come upon you. (ASV, 1901)

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the resulting gathering of the Jewish exiles back to their land has been phenomenal. There has been an immigration of over one million Jews from over 100 countries to the State of Israel. Today Israel is a secular nation at best with a wide range of attitudes toward God. The vast majority of Israelis are not Orthodox believers. There are even many varieties of the Orthodox. Most citizens in Israel would classify themselves either as atheistic or agnostic. This is what Zephaniah means by the phrase "*O nation that has no shame*". Verse 2 above clearly states that this will be the attitude of the Jews, and God's anger will come upon them because of it.

THE WRATH OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Ezekiel 20:37-38

³⁷And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. (ASV, 1901)

Because God has gathered the Jews out of wrath, He also states they will be in the Promised Land, and moves on to describe the coming wrath the Nation Israel will experience. God says that He will cause them “*to pass under the rod*”. This is a direct reference to the coming Great Tribulation when the Antichrist, at the mid-point of the seven-year Great Tribulation, will unleash a horrific persecution of the Jewish people. Under the Holocaust of Adolph Hitler one-third of the world’s Jews died. Under the Antichrist’s persecution God says that two-thirds will die (Zechariah 13:8).

Next message CYRUS ONE OF ISRAEL’S SHEPHERDS

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