

Lesson 38 (Study Notes): “Beside Me There Is No Saviour”

Class Member Reading: Isaiah 40- 49

Isaiah 40-49

God’s People Are Comforted

40 **Comfort**, O comfort my people,
says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her

that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,

that she has received from the LORD’s hand

double for all her sins. *What a touching beginning... Comfort, God speaks comfort. Note again that according to this passage, both comfort and punishment come from God.*

³ A voice cries out:

‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’

⁶ A voice says, ‘Cry out!’
And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’

All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the **word of our God will stand for ever.**

⁹ Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
'Here is your God!'

¹⁰ See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep. *What touching, nurturing language. The juxtaposition of power and tenderness is remarkable.*

¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure,
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance? *Knows creation intimately.*

¹³ Who has directed the spirit of the LORD,
or as his counsellor has instructed him?

¹⁴ Whom did he consult for his enlightenment,
and who taught him the path of justice?

Who taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding?

¹⁵ Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket,

and are accounted as dust on the scales;
see, he takes up the isles like fine dust.

¹⁶ Lebanon would not provide fuel enough,
nor are its animals enough for a burnt-offering.

¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before him;
they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

¹⁸ **To whom then will you liken God,** (Worthwhile question. To what degree *can* we comprehend God?)

or what likeness compare with him?

¹⁹ An idol? —A workman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold,
and casts for it silver chains.

²⁰ As a gift one chooses mulberry wood
—wood that will not rot—

then seeks out a skilled artisan
to set up an image that will not topple.

²¹ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

²² It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;

²³ who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. (Another theme: the grandeur of God compared to the “nothingness” of humanity. Worth discussing if there is time)

²⁴ Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble. The author portrays God as being in control of life on earth—another worthwhile discussion with trickier implications than we often realize. Does God have “loose” or “tight” control over life and

creation? In what ways do they intervene? What are their limitations imposed by themselves or something greater?)

²⁵ To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One. (Compare and contrast Ex. 15:11, a very old text “Who among the gods is like you, Lord?” It is instructive to compare the portrayal of God here and in other Biblical passages—this is the first place that full, unambiguous monotheism shows up.)

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see:

Who **created** these?

He who brings out **their host** and numbers them,

calling them all by name; (“Far from being rival gods, the heavenly host were created by God and are subject to him, appearing promptly at God’s call” Harper Collins Study Bible note. This is a transition in religious understanding)

because he is great in strength,

mighty in power,

not one is missing.

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,

‘My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God’?

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The **LORD is the everlasting God,**
the **Creator of the ends of the earth.**

He **does not faint or grow weary;**
his **understanding is unsearchable.**

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹ **but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,**
they **shall mount up with wings like eagles,**

they shall run and not be weary,

they shall walk and not faint. [Love this verse.](#)

Israel Assured of God's Help

41 Listen to me in silence, O coastlands;
let the peoples renew their strength;
let them approach, then let them speak;
let us together draw near for judgement.

² Who has roused a victor from the east,
summoned him to his service?

He delivers up nations to him,
and tramples kings under foot;
he makes them like dust with his sword,
like driven stubble with his bow.

³ He pursues them and passes on safely,
scarcely touching the path with his feet.

⁴ Who has performed and done this,
calling the generations from the beginning?

**I, the LORD, am first,
and will be with the last.**

⁵ The coastlands have seen and are afraid,
the ends of the earth tremble;
they have drawn near and come.

⁶ Each one helps the other,
saying to one another, 'Take courage!'

⁷ The artisan encourages the goldsmith,
and the one who smooths with the hammer encourages the one who strikes the
anvil,
saying of the soldering, 'It is good';
and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved.

⁸ But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, 'You are my servant,

I have chosen you and not cast you off';
¹⁰ **do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.** How Firm a Foundation. Such a
great hymn.

¹¹ Yes, all who are incensed against you
shall be ashamed and disgraced;
those who strive against you
shall be as nothing and shall perish.

¹² You shall seek those who contend with you,
but you shall not find them;
those who war against you
shall be as nothing at all.

¹³ For **I, the LORD your God,
hold your right hand;
it is I who say to you, 'Do not fear,
I will help you.'**

¹⁴ Do not fear, you worm Jacob,
you insect Israel! (well that is intense. "You are a bug! But don't worry. My favorite
bug. And I will keep you from getting squashed" Insect and worm likely refer to Israel
compared to its enemies, not from the perspective of God)

I will help you, says the LORD;
your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. (Remember that "Redeemer" is also
"avenging kinsman")

¹⁵ Now, I will make of you a threshing-sledge,
sharp, new, and having teeth;
you shall thresh the mountains and crush them,
and you shall make the hills like chaff.

¹⁶ You shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away,
and the tempest shall scatter them.

Then you shall rejoice in the LORD;
in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.

¹⁷ When the poor and needy seek water,
and there is none,
and their tongue is parched with thirst,

I the LORD will answer them,

I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

¹⁸ I will open rivers on the bare heights,
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
and the dry land springs of water.

¹⁹ I will put in the wilderness the cedar,
the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive;

I will set in the desert the cypress,
the plane and the pine together,

²⁰ so that all may see and know,

all may consider and understand,
that the hand of the LORD has done this,

the Holy One of Israel has created it. *God restores, brings life and abundance.*

The Futility of Idols

²¹ Set forth your case, says the LORD;
bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob.

²² Let them bring them, and tell us
what is to happen.

Tell us the former things, what they are,
so that we may consider them,
and that we may know their outcome;
or declare to us the things to come.

²³ Tell us what is to come hereafter,
that we may know that you are gods;
do good, or do harm,
that we may be afraid and terrified.

²⁴ You, indeed, are nothing
and your work is nothing at all;

whoever chooses you is an abomination.

²⁵ I stirred up one from the north, and he has come,
from the rising of the sun he was summoned by name.
He shall trample on rulers as on mortar,
as the potter treads clay.

²⁶ Who declared it from the beginning, so that we might know,
and beforehand, so that we might say, 'He is right'?
There was no one who declared it, none who proclaimed,
none who heard your words.

²⁷ I first have declared it to Zion,
and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good tidings.

²⁸ But when I look there is no one;
among these there is no counsellor
who, when I ask, gives an answer.

²⁹ No, they are all a delusion;
their works are nothing;
their images are empty wind.

The Servant, a Light to the Nations

42 Here is **my servant**, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth **justice** to the nations.

² He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;

³ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth **justice**.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has **established justice** in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching. (Repetition indicates God's priorities).

⁵ Thus says God, the LORD,
who **created the heavens** and stretched them out,
who **spread out the earth** and what comes from it,
who **gives breath** to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:

⁶ I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,

⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

⁸ **I am the LORD, that is my name;**
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.

⁹ See, the former things have come to pass,
and **new things I now declare;**
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

A Hymn of Praise

¹⁰ Sing to the LORD a new song,
his praise from the end of the earth!
Let the sea roar and all that fills it,
the coastlands and their inhabitants.

¹¹ Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice,
the villages that Kedar inhabits;
let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy,
let them shout from the tops of the mountains.

¹² Let them give glory to the LORD,
and declare his praise in the coastlands.

¹³ The **LORD goes forth like a soldier,**
like a warrior he stirs up his fury;
he cries out, he shouts aloud,

he shows himself mighty against his foes.

¹⁴ For a long time I have held my peace,
I have kept still and restrained myself;
now **I will cry out like a woman in labour**,
I will gasp and pant.

¹⁵ I will **lay waste** mountains and hills,
and dry up all their herbage;
I will turn the rivers into islands,
and dry up the pools.

¹⁶ I will lead the blind
by a road they do not know,
by paths they have not known
I will guide them.
I will turn the darkness before them into light,
the rough places into level ground.

These are the things I will do,
and **I will not forsake them**.

¹⁷ They shall be turned back and utterly put to shame—
those who trust in carved images,
who say to cast images,
'You are our gods.'

¹⁸ Listen, you that are deaf;
and you that are blind, look up and see!

¹⁹ Who is blind but my servant,
or deaf like my messenger whom I send?
Who is blind like my dedicated one,
or blind like the servant of the LORD?

²⁰ He sees many things, but does not observe them;
his ears are open, but he does not hear. (God is noting that though Israel is chosen,
it doesn't realize the significance of God's actions)

Israel's Disobedience

²¹ The LORD was pleased, **for the sake of his righteousness**,
to magnify his teaching and make it glorious.

²² But this is a people robbed and plundered,
all of them are trapped in holes
and hidden in prisons;

they have become a prey with no one to rescue,
a spoil with no one to say, 'Restore!'

²³ Who among you will give heed to this,
who will attend and listen for the time to come?

²⁴ Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler,
and Israel to the robbers?

Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned,
in whose ways they would not walk,
and whose law they would not obey?

²⁵ So he poured upon him the heat of his anger
and the fury of war;

it set him on fire all around, but he did not understand;
it burned him, but he did not take it to heart.

Restoration and Protection Promised

43 But now thus says the LORD,

he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.

³ For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.

I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

⁴ Because **you are precious in my sight**,

and **honoured**, and **I love you**, (These are words we all long to hear; how powerful is it to see God expressing them. It is a precious gift to be able to feel these words from God. Or anyone, for that matter)

I give people in return for you,
nations in exchange for your life.

⁵ **Do not fear, for I am with you**; (This is one of our most fundamental needs—to feel we are not alone, that there are people who care about us, who are with us)

I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;

⁶ I will say to the north, 'Give them up',
and to the south, 'Do not withhold;

bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the end of the earth—

⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
whom **I created for my glory**,
whom I formed and made.'

⁸ Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes,
who are deaf, yet have ears!

⁹ Let all the nations gather together,
and let the peoples assemble.

Who among them declared this,
and foretold to us the former things?

Let them bring their witnesses to justify them,
and let them hear and say, 'It is true.'

¹⁰ You are my witnesses, says the LORD,
and my servant whom I have chosen,
so that you may **know** and **believe** me
and understand that I am he.

Before me no god was formed, (As noted, these passages provide the first unambiguous references to monotheism in the Bible)

nor shall there be any after me.

¹¹ **I, I am the LORD,**
and besides me there is no saviour.

¹² **I declared** and **saved** and **proclaimed**,
when there was no strange god among you;

and you are my witnesses, says the LORD.

¹³ I am God, and also henceforth I am He;
there is no one who can deliver from my hand;
I work and who can hinder it?

¹⁴ Thus says the LORD,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
For your sake I will send to Babylon
and break down all the bars,
and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be turned to lamentation.

¹⁵ I am the **LORD**, your **Holy One**,
the **Creator of Israel**, your **King**.

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse,
army and warrior;

they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:

¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.

¹⁹ **I am about to do a new thing;**
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

²⁰ The wild animals will honour me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,

to give drink to my chosen people,

²¹ the people whom I formed for myself

so that they might declare my praise. (Note this perspective on why God created humans—so that they can praise him. Cf. 43:7. I like the LDS reason much better. We praise and bring glory to God by becoming more like them and loving each other, being transformed and redeemed)

²² Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob;
but you have been weary of me, O Israel!
²³ You have not brought me your sheep for burnt-offerings,
or honoured me with your sacrifices.
I have not burdened you with offerings,
or wearied you with frankincense.
²⁴ You have not bought me sweet cane with money,
or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices.
**But you have burdened me with your sins;
you have wearied me with your iniquities.**

²⁵ I, I am He
who **blots out your transgressions for my own sake**, Powerful idea—God forgives
us and redeems us not because we are so awesome and great right now, but
because of what *God* is).
and I will not remember your sins.
²⁶ Accuse me, let us go to trial;
set forth your case, so that you may be proved right.
²⁷ Your first ancestor sinned,
and your interpreters transgressed against me.
²⁸ Therefore I profaned the princes of the sanctuary,
I delivered Jacob to utter destruction,
and Israel to reviling.

God's Blessing on Israel

44 But now **hear**, O Jacob my servant,
Israel whom I have chosen!
² Thus says the LORD who made you,
who formed you in the womb and **will help you:**
Do not fear, O Jacob my servant,
Jeshurun whom I have chosen.
³ For I will **pour water** on the thirsty land,
and streams on the dry ground;

I will **pour my spirit** upon your descendants,
and **my blessing** on your offspring.

⁴ They shall spring up like a green tamarisk,
like willows by flowing streams.

⁵ This one will say, 'I am the LORD's',
another will be called by the name of Jacob,
yet another will write on the hand, 'The LORD's',
and adopt the name of Israel.

⁶ Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:

I am the first and I am the last;

besides me there is no god.

⁷ Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,
let them declare and set it forth before me.

Who has announced from of old the things to come?

Let them tell us what is yet to be.

⁸ **Do not fear, or be afraid;**
have I not told you from of old and declared it?

You are my witnesses!

Is there any god besides me?

There is no other rock; I know not one.

The Absurdity of Idol-Worship

⁹ All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know. And so they will be put to shame. ¹⁰Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no good? ¹¹Look, all its devotees shall be put to shame; the artisans too are merely human. Let them all assemble, let them stand up; they shall be terrified, they shall all be put to shame.

¹² The blacksmith fashions it and works it over the coals, shaping it with hammers, and forging it with his strong arm; he becomes hungry and his strength fails, he drinks no water and is faint. ¹³The carpenter stretches a line, marks it out with a stylus, fashions it with planes, and marks it with a compass; he makes it in human form, with human beauty, to be set up in a shrine. ¹⁴He cuts down cedars or chooses

a holm tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. ¹⁵Then it can be used as fuel. Part of it he takes and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Then he makes a god and worships it, makes it a carved image and bows down before it. ¹⁶Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he roasts meat, eats it, and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, 'Ah, I am warm, I can feel the fire!' ¹⁷The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it, and worships it; he prays to it and says, 'Save me, for you are my god!'

¹⁸They do not know, nor do they comprehend; for their eyes are shut, so that they cannot see, and their minds as well, so that they cannot understand. ¹⁹No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, 'Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted meat and have eaten. Now shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?' ²⁰He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot save himself or say, 'Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?' **This is a mocking caricature of paganism—pagans didn't believe they were worshipping the objects, rather they believed the objects represented the gods, or more often that rituals could transfer the god(dess)'s spirit into the object. In both cases the gods and goddesses were worshipped, not the idols.**

Israel Is Not Forgotten

²¹ Remember these things, O Jacob,
and Israel, for you are my servant;
I formed you, you are my servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.

²² I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud,
and your sins like mist;
return to me, for I have redeemed you.

²³ Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it;
shout, O depths of the earth;
break forth into singing, O mountains,
O forest, and every tree in it!
For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,

and will be glorified in Israel.

²⁴ Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,
who formed you in the womb:

I am the LORD, who made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens,
who by myself spread out the earth;

²⁵ who frustrates the omens of liars,
and makes fools of diviners;

who turns back the wise,
and makes their knowledge foolish;

²⁶ who confirms the word of his servant,
and **fulfils the prediction of his messengers**; This is an important theme in these chapters.

who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited',
and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be rebuilt,
and I will raise up their ruins';

²⁷ who says to the deep, 'Be dry—
I will dry up your rivers';

²⁸ who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, (Yup, that Cyrus, who conquered Babylon in 539)

and he shall carry out all my purpose';
and who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be rebuilt',
and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'

Cyrus, God's Instrument

45 Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,

whose right hand I have grasped
to subdue nations before him
and strip kings of their robes,
to open doors before him—
and the gates shall not be closed:

² I will go before you
and level the mountains,

I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
and cut through the bars of iron,

³ I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.

⁴ For the sake of my servant Jacob,
and Israel my chosen,
I call you by your name,
I surname you, though you do not know me.

⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other;
besides me there is no god.

I arm you, though you do not know me, (Note the repetition. The author's appropriation of one of the most powerful figures of the time is both creative and a bit amusing.)

⁶ so that they may know, from the rising of the sun
and from the west, that there is no one besides me;
I am the LORD, and there is no other.

⁷ I form light and create darkness,
I make weal and create woe;
I the LORD do all these things.

⁸ Shower, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness;
let the earth open, that salvation may spring up,
and let it cause righteousness to sprout up also;
I the LORD have created it.

⁹ Woe to you who strive with your Maker,
earthen vessels with the potter!
Does the clay say to the one who fashions it, 'What are you making?'
or 'Your work has no handles'?

¹⁰ Woe to anyone who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?'
or to a woman, 'With what are you in labour?' (I appreciate the inclusion of both parents)

¹¹ Thus says the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Will you question me about my children,
or command me concerning the work of my hands?

¹² I made the earth,
and created humankind upon it;
it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,
and I commanded all their host.

¹³ I have aroused Cyrus in righteousness,
and I will make all his paths straight;
he shall build my city
and set my exiles free,
not for price or reward,
says the LORD of hosts.

¹⁴ Thus says the LORD:
The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Ethiopia,
and the Sabeans, tall of stature,
shall come over to you and be yours,
they shall follow you;
they shall come over in chains and bow down to you.
They will make supplication to you, saying,
'God is with you alone, and there is no other;
there is no god besides him.'

¹⁵ Truly, you are a God who hides himself,
O God of Israel, the Saviour.

¹⁶ All of them are put to shame and confounded,
the makers of idols go in confusion together.

¹⁷ But Israel is saved by the LORD
with everlasting salvation;
you shall not be put to shame or confounded
to all eternity.

¹⁸ For thus says the LORD,
who created the heavens
(he is God!),
who formed the earth and made it

(he established it;
he did not create it a chaos,
he formed it to be inhabited!):

I am the LORD, and there is no other. (Note the frequent

¹⁹ I did not speak in secret,
in a land of darkness;
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,
'Seek me in chaos.'

**I the LORD speak the truth,
I declare what is right.**

Idols Cannot Save Babylon

²⁰ Assemble yourselves and come together,
draw near, you survivors of the nations!
They have no knowledge—
those who carry about their wooden idols,
and keep on praying to a god
that cannot save.

²¹ Declare and present your case;
let them take counsel together!
Who told this long ago?
Who declared it of old?
Was it not I, the LORD?
There is no other god besides me,
a righteous God and a Saviour;
there is no one besides me.

²² Turn to me and be saved,
all the ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other.

²³ By myself I have sworn,
from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness
a word that shall not return:
'To me every knee shall bow,

every tongue shall swear.'

²⁴ Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me,
are righteousness and strength;
all who were incensed against him
shall come to him and be ashamed.

²⁵ In the LORD all the offspring of Israel
shall triumph and glory.

46 Bel bows down, Nebo stoops,
their idols are on beasts and cattle;
these things you carry are loaded
as burdens on weary animals. (Contrast: God carries his people, while other gods
must be carried by their people)

² They stoop, they bow down together;
they cannot save the burden,
but themselves go into captivity.

³ Listen to me, O house of Jacob,
all the remnant of the house of Israel,
who have been **borne by me from your birth,**
carried from the womb; More nurturing language

⁴ even to your old age I am he,
even when you turn grey I will carry you.

I have made, and I will bear;
I will carry and will save.

⁵ To whom will you liken me and make me equal,
and compare me, as though we were alike?

⁶ Those who lavish gold from the purse,
and weigh out silver in the scales—
they hire a goldsmith, who makes it into a god;
then they fall down and worship!

⁷ They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it,

they set it in its place, and it stands there;
it cannot move from its place.
If one cries out to it, it does not answer
or save anyone from trouble.

⁸ Remember this and consider,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
⁹ remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like me,
¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My purpose shall stand,
and I will fulfil my intention',
¹¹ calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man for my purpose from a far country.
**I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have planned, and I will do it.**

¹² Listen to me, you stubborn of heart,
you who are far from deliverance:
¹³ I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off,
and my salvation will not tarry;
I will put salvation in Zion,
for Israel my glory.

The Humiliation of Babylon

47 Come down and sit in the dust,
virgin daughter Babylon!
Sit on the ground without a throne,
daughter Chaldea!
For you shall no more be called
tender and delicate.

² Take the millstones and grind meal,
remove your veil,
strip off your robe, uncover your legs,
pass through the rivers.

³ Your nakedness shall be uncovered,
and your shame shall be seen. (More problematic misogyny—Babylon is
personified as a young woman who loses all status and falls from princess to captive)
I will take vengeance,
and I will spare no one.

⁴ Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is his name—
is the Holy One of Israel.

⁵ Sit in silence, and go into darkness,
daughter Chaldea!
For you shall no more be called
the mistress of kingdoms.

⁶ I was angry with my people,
I profaned my heritage;
I gave them into your hand,
you showed them no mercy;
on the aged you made your yoke
exceedingly heavy.

⁷ You said, 'I shall be mistress for ever',
so that you did not lay these things to heart
or remember their end.

⁸ Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures,
who sit securely,
who say in your heart,
'I am, and there is no one besides me;
I shall not sit as a widow
or know the loss of children'—

⁹ both these things shall come upon you
in a moment, in one day:
the loss of children and widowhood

shall come upon you in full measure, (Again, status of women and loss being used
as an object lesson—worth pushback. These are hurtful passages)
in spite of your many sorceries
and the great power of your enchantments.

¹⁰ You felt secure in your wickedness;
you said, 'No one sees me.'
Your wisdom and your knowledge
led you astray,
and you said in your heart,
'I am, and there is no one besides me.'

¹¹ But evil shall come upon you,
which you cannot charm away;
disaster shall fall upon you,
which you will not be able to ward off;
and ruin shall come on you suddenly,
of which you know nothing.

¹² Stand fast in your enchantments
and your many sorceries,
with which you have laboured from your youth;
perhaps you may be able to succeed,
perhaps you may inspire terror.

¹³ You are wearied with your many consultations;
let those who study the heavens
stand up and save you,
those who gaze at the stars
and at each new moon predict
what shall befall you.

¹⁴ See, they are like stubble,
the fire consumes them;
they cannot deliver themselves
from the power of the flame.
No coal for warming oneself is this,

no fire to sit before!

¹⁵ Such to you are those with whom you have laboured,
who have trafficked with you from your youth;
they all wander about in their own paths;
there is no one to save you.

God the Creator and Redeemer

48 Hear this, O house of Jacob,
who are called by the name of Israel,
and who came forth from the loins of Judah;
who swear by the name of the LORD,
and invoke the God of Israel,
but not in truth or right.

² For they call themselves after the holy city,
and lean on the God of Israel;
the LORD of hosts is his name.

³ The former things I declared long ago,
they went out from my mouth and I made them known;
then suddenly I did them and they came to pass.

⁴ Because I know that you are obstinate,
and your neck is an iron sinew
and your forehead brass,

⁵ I declared them to you from long ago,
before they came to pass I announced them to you,
so that you would not say, 'My idol did them,
my carved image and my cast image commanded them.'

⁶ You have heard; now see all this;
and will you not declare it?

From this time forward I make you hear new things,
hidden things that you have not known.

⁷ They are created now, not long ago;

before today you have never heard of them,
so that you could not say, 'I already knew them.'

⁸ You have never heard, you have never known,
from of old your ear has not been opened.
For I knew that you would deal very treacherously,
and that from birth you were called a rebel.

⁹ **For my name's sake** I defer my anger, (More emphatic repetition on the theme that even though God's people are unworthy, he will save them for "his own sake"—that is, his reputation).

for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you,
so that I may not cut you off.

¹⁰ See, I have refined you, but not like silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of adversity.

¹¹ **For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it,**
for why should my name be profaned?
My glory I will not give to another.

¹² Listen to me, O Jacob,
and Israel, whom I called:
I am He; I am the first,
and I am the last.

¹³ My hand laid the foundation of the earth,
and my right hand spread out the heavens;
when I summon them,
they stand at attention.

¹⁴ Assemble, all of you, and hear!
Who among them has declared these things?
The LORD loves him; (Cyrus! Who is a foreign emperor. I think it would be productive to reflect on how God loves and uses other leaders outside Mormonism)
he shall perform his purpose on Babylon,
and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans.

¹⁵ I, even I, have spoken and called him,
I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way.

¹⁶ Draw near to me, hear this!
From the beginning I have not spoken in secret,
from the time it came to be I have been there.
And now the Lord GOD has sent me and his spirit.

¹⁷ Thus says the LORD,
your **Redeemer**, the Holy One of Israel:
I am the LORD your God,
who **teaches you for your own good**,
who **leads you in the way you should go**.

¹⁸ O that you had paid attention to my commandments!
Then your prosperity would have been like a river,
and your success like the waves of the sea;
¹⁹ your offspring would have been like the sand,
and your descendants like its grains;
their name would never be cut off
or destroyed from before me.

²⁰ Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, (Besides the clear reference to Cyrus,
note the text clearly states the audience is in Babylon. The beginning of Isaiah takes
place in Judea)

declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it,
send it forth to the end of the earth;
say, 'The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!'

²¹ They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts;
he made water flow for them from the rock;
he split open the rock and the water gushed out. (Alluding to the
Exodus/Wilderness period—God repeats his historic miracles)

²² 'There is no peace', says the LORD, 'for the wicked.'

The Servant's Mission

49 Listen to me, O coastlands, (The author seems to have taken his own advice to

“go out of Babylon”; from this period on the action takes place in Jerusalem.)
pay attention, you peoples from far away!

The LORD called me before I was born,
while I was in my mother’s womb he named me.

² He made my mouth like a sharp sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow,
in his quiver he hid me away.

³ And he said to me, ‘**You are my servant,**
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.’ (The most common interpretation of the
“servant songs” is that the “servant” represents Israel personified, as is explicitly
stated here)

⁴ But I said, ‘I have laboured in vain,
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my cause is with the LORD,
and my reward with my God.’

⁵ And now the LORD says,
who formed me in the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him,
and that Israel might be gathered to him,
for I am honoured in the sight of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—

⁶ he says,
‘It is too light a thing that **you should be my servant**
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the survivors of Israel;

I will give you as a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.’ (There is a translation issue
here. The subject of “raise up” is God, so a better translation is “It is too light a thing,
you being my servant, that I should only raise up...”. See the Study Bible notes)

⁷ Thus says the LORD,
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,

the slave of rulers,
'Kings shall see and stand up,
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.'

Zion's Children to Be Brought Home

⁸ Thus says the LORD:

In a time of favour I have answered you,
on a day of salvation I have helped you;
I have kept you and given you
as a covenant to the people,
to establish the land,

to apportion the desolate heritages;

⁹ **saying to the prisoners, 'Come out',
to those who are in darkness, 'Show yourselves.'**

They shall feed along the ways,
on all the bare heights shall be their pasture;

¹⁰ they shall not hunger or thirst,
neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down,
for he who has pity on them will lead them,
and by springs of water will guide them.

¹¹ And I will turn all my mountains into a road,
and my highways shall be raised up.

¹² Lo, these shall come from far away,
and lo, these from the north and from the west,
and these from the land of Syene.

¹³ Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth;
break forth, O mountains, into singing!

**For the LORD has comforted his people,
and will have compassion on his suffering ones.**

¹⁴ But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me,

my Lord has forgotten me.'

¹⁵ **Can a woman forget her nursing-child,
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?**

**Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.**

¹⁶ **See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;
your walls are continually before me.** I love these verses, which vividly express God's steadfast love. Again we see a consistent use of both male and female images for God's love and devotion for us. I think we can read this both as suggesting Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother, and/or how God has a perfection of traits that transcend gender.

¹⁷ Your builders outdo your destroyers,
and those who laid you waste go away from you.

¹⁸ Lift up your eyes all around and see;
they all gather, they come to you.

As I live, says the LORD,
you shall put all of them on like an ornament,
and like a bride you shall bind them on.

¹⁹ Surely your waste and your desolate places
and your devastated land—
surely now you will be too crowded for your inhabitants,
and those who swallowed you up will be far away.

²⁰ The children born in the time of your bereavement
will yet say in your hearing:

'The place is too crowded for me;
make room for me to settle.'

²¹ Then you will say in your heart,
'Who has borne me these?

I was bereaved and barren,
exiled and put away—
so who has reared these?

I was left all alone—

where then have these come from?' These verses draw on particular cultural values, but the message is touching—we will be so blessed that we look around us in

astonishment at what God has done.

²² Thus says the Lord GOD:

I will soon lift up my hand to the nations,
and raise my signal to the peoples;
and they shall bring your sons in their bosom,
and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

²³ Kings shall be your foster-fathers,
and their queens your nursing-mothers.

With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you,
and lick the dust of your feet.

Then you will know that I am the LORD;
those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.

²⁴ Can the prey be taken from the mighty,
or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?

²⁵ But thus says the LORD:

Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken,
and the prey of the tyrant be rescued;
for I will contend with those who contend with you,
and I will save your children.

²⁶ I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh,
and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. (Disturbing wording, but it is true that ideally oppressors are punished by the natural consequences of their own actions. I wish we lived in a world where the true costs of all actions were apparent and justly meted).

Then all flesh shall know
that I am the LORD your Saviour,
and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Additional Reading:

Other Reading: