

# The Millennium Forecast

The Book of Isaiah

---

Text

Isaiah 51:1-23

Topic

Listening to the LORD describe Israel's future stirs-up an eagerness in Isaiah to go home.

Title

***"Don't He Make You Wanna Go Home?"***

---

***"Oh, the burden on my back grows heavier with every step, but my heart longs for the Celestial City. I press on, for there awaits a home not built by human hands, a place where my soul shall find true rest and eternal joy. The journey is arduous, yet my eagerness to reach the heavenly abode propels me forward, enduring all trials on the path homeward."***

Called *Pilgrim's Progress* for short, the full title of John Bunyon's 1678 masterpiece is *The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*. It is an allegory of our walk with the Lord from Earth to Heaven.

The main character is Christian, who *is* a Christian. He is every Christian. He is, in his own words, "eager to reach the heavenly abode."

**Our passage in Isaiah describes an eagerness to reach the heavenly abode.**

It's in verse eleven: "So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; Sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

## **Christian was eager to go home...Christians ought to be eager to go home.**

- The apostle Paul was eager: "My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Philippians 1:23).
- The apostle Peter was eager. He urges us to "hasten" the Lord's coming (Second Peter 3:12).

What about us? How eager are we to go home? I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Let's Be Eager To Go Home**, and **#2 Let's Be Loathe To Stay Here**.

### **#1 - Let's Be Eager To Go Home (v1-11)**

Isaiah's immediate audience was the nation of Judah. His topics revolve around them and their promised land and earthly kingdom. We can see ourselves, the Church, in relation to the events discussed. For example, when Isaiah looks into the far future and sees the return of the Lord to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth that was promised to Israel, we come with Him from Heaven to Earth.

The LORD told the Jews that in approximately 150 years they would be disciplined by God for their idolatry and spiritual adultery. King Nebuchadnezzar would burn the Temple, raze Jerusalem, tear down its walls. The Jews would be captives in Babylon.

King Cyrus of Persia would give the Jews their freedom to return to Jerusalem and rebuild. We like to point out every chance we get that in a stunning prophecy, Cyrus is named by Isaiah **before he was born**. Take that, Nostradamus.

Isaiah is a little like Sam Becket. He's the scientist leaping through time in the SyFy classic series, *Quantum Leap*. We need to pay close attention to Isaiah's 'leaps' to know where he has taken us.

- Sometimes he describes the Jews returning to Jerusalem from Babylon.
- Sometimes he describes the Jews in the future Great Tribulation.
- Sometimes he describes the 1000yr Kingdom on Earth Jesus will establish at His return to Earth.
- Sometimes he describes eternity.

In verses one through eight Isaiah is jumpy.

Isa 51:1 "Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, You who seek the LORD...  
[There was always a remnant of believing Jews. They were declared "righteous" by

believing God. They sought God, following His precepts]. Look to the rock *from which* you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit *from which* you were dug [The idiom we would use is, "You're a chip off the old block." Abraham was the block].

Isa 51:2 Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah *who* bore you; For I called him alone, And blessed him and increased him."

When descendants of Abraham look at his storied life they see the whole plan of God to redeem Jews & Gentiles. One man becomes as numerous as the sand along the seashore, and as the stars in the sky (Genesis 22:17). We would say, "He who has begun a good work will perform it." The Jews might be in captivity. They might suffer terrifically throughout history. But God will prove faithful to Abraham.

For his part Abraham stumbled at first, but as he continued with the Lord, he found his spiritual rhythm. So much so that at one point he would have sacrificed his only son without asking a question.

Like father Abraham, like his sons. Judah could have that same faith. So can we as *spiritual* sons & daughters.

Isa 51:3 For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

Isa 51:4 "Listen to Me, My people; And give ear to Me, O My nation: For law will proceed from Me, And I will make My justice rest As a light of the peoples.

Isa 51:5 My righteousness *is* near, My salvation has gone forth, And My arms will judge the peoples; The coastlands will wait upon Me, And on My arm they will trust. ["Peoples" & "the coastlands" refers to Gentile nations].

This sounds very Kingdom-of-God-on-Earth-ish. The Bible tells us Jesus will return to establish a Kingdom on Earth that will last for 1000yrs. His return is at the end of 7yrs of Great Tribulation.

- Jesus will transform "waste places" and the "wilderness" to be like Eden.
- His rule will be in righteousness, dispensing justice.
- Jesus will save all who call upon Him.

Isa 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, And look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, The earth will grow old like a garment, And those who dwell in it will die in like manner; But My salvation will be forever, And My righteousness will not be abolished.

This is a leap farther forward. After the 1000yr Kingdom the Lord will create new heavens & a new Earth that will exist eternally.

Isa 51:7 "Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, You people in whose heart is My law: Do not fear the reproach of men, Nor be afraid of their insults.

Isa 51:8 For the moth will eat them up like a garment, And the worm will eat them like wool; But My righteousness will be forever, And My salvation from generation to generation."

Back from the future... The remnant can encourage themselves by remembering their destiny as opposed to that of unbelievers.

Those who follow the Lord will be reproached and insulted on Earth. That can hurt, but it doesn't need to. Would you rather unbelieving men praise you, or the Lord? He bore their reproaches for you; now it is your turn to do bear them for Him. As Maxwell Smart would say, "And loving it!"

Isa 51:9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake as in the ancient days, In the generations of old. *Are You not the arm* that cut Rahab apart, *And* wounded the serpent?

Isa 51:10 *Are You not the One* who dried up the sea, The waters of the great deep; That made the depths of the sea a road For the redeemed to cross over?

Commentators see these three verses as a prayer from Isaiah's coal-burned lips. Is it, though??

God's words were a sermon about the Jews in Bible prophecy. Isaiah gets excited. I can't really blame him for going full Pentecostal. Instead of saying, "Can I get an Amen!"; Isaiah said, "Can I get an A-wake!"

"Awake... Awake... Awake." Who does Isaiah think he is to order the LORD who never slumbers or sleeps to awaken? *That isn't what Isaiah was doing.* There *are* exhortations in the Bible for sleepy, lazy believers to wake up & serve. This isn't that. He was asking the LORD to "wake up" the way our kids might come to us on Christmas morning and say "Get up! It's time to open presents!!"

Nemo was super excited; it was the first day of school! Marlin was asleep. "Get up! Get up! Time for school! Time for school! First day of school!"

**Isaiah was excited to go home "to Jerusalem and beyond."**

"Are You not *the arm* that cut Rahab apart, And wounded the serpent?" Rahab, in the Bible, is another name for Egypt. The "serpent" or *monster* (in some versions) is Pharaoh. The LORD recalls the drying-up of the Red Sea that provided the redeemed Hebrews a clear, dry path across. When the Egyptians followed, the water was released, drowning the army.

Isa 51:11 So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness; Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

**D**o we have that eagerness? Sure we do... Or we did & can once again. As the Bible ends, "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And ...him who hears say[s], "Come!" (v17).

## #2 - Let's Be Loathe To Stay Here (v12-23)

If you have been with us before, you've heard me talk about Jesus coming to resurrect the dead believers of the Church Age and transform living believers. We call this event the Rapture of the Church. It can occur *anytime* and it **will** occur prior to the Great Tribulation. It is a pre-Tribulation event.

**We don't hold this position because we want to avoid persecution; We hold it because it is what the Bible teaches.**

Opponents of the pre-Tribulation rapture are multiplying and getting more antagonistic. They will try to convince you, for example, that no one in the early church ever believed in such nonsense. That's not true. Here's a quote from Irenaeus. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John. Irenaeus declared, "'When in the end that **church will suddenly be caught up from this**, then it is said, 'There will be tribulation such as not been since the beginning, nor will be.' " (AD130-202, *Against Heresies*, 5.29).

With the Church removed, God focuses on the Jews. That is why the prophet Jeremiah called the Great Tribulation, The Time of **Jacob's** Trouble. The remainder of the chapter seems mostly set in that troubled time.

Isa 51:12 "I, even I, am He who comforts you...

The LORD's comfort is not a food, or a favorite bankie, or a hug with tapping. Those are fine in their own way. No, by "comfort" He means preserving His often

undeserving people. It isn't antisemitic to point out Israel's epic failures. Takes one to know one.

Isa 51:12 "... Who *are* you that you should be afraid Of a man *who* will die, And of the son of a man *who* will be made like grass?

Isa 51:13 And you forget the LORD your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens And laid the foundations of the earth; You have feared continually every day Because of the fury of the oppressor, When *he has* prepared to destroy. And where *is* the fury of the oppressor?

"Fury" is a terrifying description of Satan's efforts against Israel in the Time of Jacob's Trouble:

- He is depicted as a great red dragon wanting to devour Jesus in His first coming.
- He is depicted as a flood in his efforts to kill every last Jew to thwart the return of the Lord.

Fear of any man, or fear of anything at all besides God, is irrational for a believer in Jesus. What is the worse thing that we face? Death. For a believer, "to die is gain."

Yes, you will suffer. In some cases your suffering will be extreme. I've been thinking about what the apostle Paul said, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). "This present time" isn't merely a season. It is all of human history from the fig to now. Paul immediately brings up creation in the next two verses in Romans 8. We get overwhelmed by pain, but it is nothing when you consider the Heaven you are journeying to.

Isa 51:14 The captive exile hastens, that he may be loosed, That he should not die in the pit, And that his bread should not fail.

The Jews would be "captive exiles" in Babylon. This describes their fear that they were headed toward extinction. They were ignoring the LORD's prophecies and promises that the nation could never become extinct. The destiny of the entire human race depended upon God working through them.

Isa 51:15 But I *am* the LORD your God, Who divided the sea whose waves roared - The LORD of hosts *is* His name. [*"Hosts" is armies*].

Isa 51:16 And I have put My words in your mouth; I have covered you with the shadow of My hand, That I may plant the heavens, Lay the foundations of the earth, And say to Zion, 'You are My people.' "

Like Fievel Moskowitz, God "Had a plan." It was to have a special, set-apart nation to share His "words" with Gentile nations. He protected them with His "hosts." He shaded them when necessary.

Planting "the heavens" and laying "the foundations of the Earth" was a preliminary, and temporary, project. The LORD required a workshop to work on His people.

Isa 51:17 Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem...

Now who is excited? The LORD pictures Himself waking-up a slumbering child so *they* don't miss the celebration.

Isa 51:17 ... You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD The cup of His fury; You have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, *And* drained *it* out.  
Has any people group suffered for practically their entire existence more than the nation of Israel? In the future 7yrs God is pours out wrath upon their oppressors.

I tend to forget that Jerusalem will be attacked by the antichrist just prior to the Lord's return to Earth. A description can be found in the fourteenth chapter of the OT Book of Zechariah. It's ugly.

### **Jesus returns & once again saves His people.**

Isa 51:18 *There is* no one to guide her Among all the sons she has brought forth; Nor *is there any* who takes her by the hand Among all the sons she has brought up.

Isa 51:19 These two *things* have come to you; Who will be sorry for you? - Desolation and destruction, famine and sword - By whom will I comfort you?

Isa 51:20 Your sons have fainted, They lie at the head of all the streets, Like an antelope in a net; They are full of the fury of the LORD, The rebuke of your God.

The Jews suffer terribly during the Time of Jacob's Trouble. Only 1/3 of the Jews on Earth will survive.

Isa 51:21 Therefore please hear this, you afflicted, And drunk but not with wine.  
[Makes me think of Hannah weeping in the Temple. Eli thought she was drunk with wine, but it was an intoxication from sorrow over being barren]

Isa 51:22 Thus says your Lord, The LORD and your God, *Who* pleads the cause of His people: "See, I have taken out of your hand The cup of trembling, The dregs of the cup of My fury; You shall no longer drink it.

Isa 51:23 But I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you, Who have said to you, 'Lie down, that we may walk over you.' And you have laid your body like the ground, And as the street, for those who walk over." [So much death that their bodies are the street their enemies walked on]

**I**saiah's earlier shout-out lasted about 30 seconds. It occupies three verses. The LORD's encouragement occupies twenty. Maybe we should listen more.

You must have noticed that the LORD tells the Jews to "listen" three times (v1, 4&7).

A.W. Tozer had plenty to say about listening. He prefaced it by saying, "*The Bible will never be a living Book to us until we are convinced that God is articulate in His universe. [Did] a silent God suddenly began to speak in a book and when the book was finished lapsed back into silence again forever?*"

With regard to listening Tozer said:

*It is important that we get still to wait on God. And it is best that we get alone, preferably with our Bible outspread before us. Then if we will we may draw near to God and begin to hear Him speak to us in our hearts.*

I had the privilege of meeting Alan Redpath. He has a story about Tozer. When they both served in Chicago, Tozer - who was there before Redpath - invited Redpath to pray with him mornings. Redpath said he went, but not often. He felt he was interrupting something deep going on between Tozer & his Lord.

*Wait, wait, wait on the Lord  
I must wait, wait, wait on the Lord  
Learn my lessons well  
In His timing He will tell you  
What to do, where to go, what to say*