

ISAIAH

Chapter 48

Stubborn Israel

“Listen to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and come from the line of Judah, you who take oaths in the name of the LORD and invoke the God of Israel— but not in truth or righteousness— ² you who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and rely on the God of Israel— the LORD Almighty is his name: ³ I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass. ⁴ For I knew how stubborn you were; the sinews of your neck were iron, your forehead was bronze. ⁵ Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, ‘My idols did them; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.’ ⁶ You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them? “From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you. ⁷ They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today. So you cannot say, ‘Yes, I knew of them.’ ⁸ You have neither heard nor understood; from of old your ear has not been open. Well do I know how treacherous you are; you were called a rebel from birth. ⁹ For my own name’s sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you, so as not to cut you off. ¹⁰ See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. ¹¹ For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.

48:1 *house of Jacob.* Israel, named for their forefather. (TLSB)

called by the name. They belong to Israel (see 43:7 and note). (CSB)

Israel. See Ge 32:28 and note. (CSB)

This was a name that reminded them of God’s choice and His faithfulness to them over the centuries. (PBC)

waters of Judah. Compares Judah to a source or spring of the people. Isaiah’s audience was chiefly from Judah. (TLSB)

Judah. The main tribe of the southern kingdom. See Ge 49:8 and note. (CSB)

swear. Oaths identify them as former citizens of the Holy City, Jerusalem. (TLSB)

not in truth. Contrast the oaths of 65:16. (CSB)

The great fault of their religion and their concepts of God was that it did not have the Messiah at its center. (PBC)

48:2 *holy city*. Jerusalem, where the temple was located (see 2:2–4 and note; 52:1; 56:7; 57:13; 64:10–11; 65:11). See also 1:26 and note; 4:3 and note; Da 9:24. (CSB)

rely on ... God.† Contrast 31:1; 36:6, 9; Eze 29:6–7. (CSB)

They defiantly claimed the assistance of the almighty God for themselves, merely on account of their outward relation to the Lord's people, forgetting that God is also the Holy One and a devouring fire upon all hypocrites. (Kretzmann)

LORD Almighty. See 13:4 and note. (CSB)

48:3 *former things*. See 41:22 and note. (CSB)

The Lord of hosts is indeed the Lord of history. The former things happened exactly as He declared. Doubters should believe that new things, still hidden, will come. (TLSB)

The Lord asserts His ability to foretell the future. The history of God's OT people is a history of prophecy. God foretold the coming of the Messiah to Adam and Eve. He told Noah to prepare for the coming flood. He called Abraham and told him that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in heaven and sand on the seashore. He sent Moses to deliver His people from Egypt. These and other things God foretold long before they occurred. (PBC)

I did them. No idol or "carved image" had anything to do with planning and guiding the course of events (vv 3–5). (TLSB)

they came to pass. See 42:9. (CSB)

48:4 *stubborn ... bronze*. See Jer 6:28; cf. Eze 3:7. (CSB)

Like animals who refused to be led in the direction their master desired. (TLSB)

48:5 *My idols did them*. See Isaiah's harsh words about idolatry in 44:17–20 (see also notes there). (CSB)

wooden image and metal god. See note on 44:12–20. (CSB)

And my graven image and my molten image hath commanded them, ascribing to these false gods an interference with the affairs of the world which was excluded by the Lord's proof of prophecy and fulfillment. (Kretzmann)

48:6 *You have heard*. Israel knew from experience that "former things" (v 3), pronounced by God's prophets long in advance, materialized as foretold. (TLSB)

new things.† Israel's restoration (see 42:9 and note) and the implementation of God's announced plan to redeem all nations from the bondage of sin. (CSB)

The Israelites should not hesitate to believe. However, they “never heard” the prophets' teachings with penitent hearts but scoffed at them instead (v 8; 5:19). (TLSB)

hidden things. Cf. Ro 16:25–26. (CSB)

The events like the overthrow of Babylon might be thought of. Though Isaiah had prophesied this (13:19) the fact as such was good as unknown, for Israel had as yet not taken it to heart. (Leupold)

48:7 *created now.* Now given substance in the prophetic announcement of their coming. (CSB)

48:8 *neither heard nor understood.* See 1:3. (CSB)

He charges the nation in its spiritual intractability, practically with never having learned her lessons in the past. (Leupold)

ear ... not ... open. See 6:10 and note. (CSB)

She had degenerated in the course of time to the point where her ear has long been completely closed. (Leupold)

rebel. See 1:2; 46:8 and notes. (CSB)

Jacob, renamed Israel in Gn 32:28. His life was typified by deceit, treachery, and dishonesty (cf Gn 27:1–29; 30:34–43). (TLSB)

More than a measure of dullness or weakness is attributed to Israel. She has long been very treacherous, a charge that God makes in a tone marked by some impatience. (Leupold)

This is what Moses called you, and this is what I call you too. (Luther)

48:9 FOR MY OWN NAME'S SAKE – This underscores the grace of God and His faithfulness to all His promises. (PBC)

delay my wrath. Cf. Ps 78:38. (CSB)

That is, “for the purpose of your salvation.” (Luther)

my praise. The praise God is worthy of. (CSB)

48:10 *refined ... tested.* Images of judgment (see Jer 9:7; Eze 22:18–22). Purifying fire is also mentioned in 1:25; 4:4. (CSB)

The Lord foretells the Babylonian captivity and return so that Israel will not attribute those events to their idols (v 5). By this, the Lord refines His people for service to His glory.

furnace of affliction. For Israel, Egypt had been an “iron-smelting furnace” (Dt 4:20; 1Ki 8:51; Jer 11:4). The fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile were a similar furnace. (CSB)

The exodus and now the Babylonian captivity. (TLSB)

48:11 *For ... defamed.* Jerusalem’s fall and God’s scattered people had brought dishonor to God’s name (see Eze 36:20–23). (CSB)

We measure the greatness of God in the astounding fact that He carried out His plan through these rebellious and treacherous people. (PBC)

my glory. See 40:5 and note. (CSB)

God would not share His honor with idols. (TLSB)

Here you see that a self-righteous person is a thief of the divine glory and also an idolater, because he lays claim to God’s glory for himself. He does not pray, “Hallowed be Thy name.” Aspiring to the glory of divinity is a most grievous monstrosity. Here you see the battle between God and the self-righteous concerning glory. (Luther)

48:1–11 The Lord chastens Israel for stubbornness, indifference, and idolatry, noting that they were corrupt from the beginning. You, too, started life in the corruption of sin, which continues to manifest itself in sins like those of Israel. The Lord’s refinement can purge away your sins. As you reflect on your persistent weaknesses, recall also the Lord’s patience (vv 9–11) and the mercy announced for you in Christ. • Lord, forgive my obstinacy, and refine my attitude. Amen. (TLSB)

Israel Freed

¹² “Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last. ¹³ My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together. ¹⁴ “Come together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols has foretold these things? The LORD’s chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon; his arm will be against the Babylonians. ¹⁵ I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him. I will bring him, and he will succeed in his mission. ¹⁶ “Come near me and listen to this: “From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the

time it happens, I am there.” And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit. ¹⁷ This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. ¹⁸ If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. ¹⁹ Your descendants would have been like the sand, your children like its numberless grains; their name would never be cut off nor destroyed from before me.” ²⁰ Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends 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 the rock and water gushed out. ²² “There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked.”

48:12–16 Three servants are mentioned. The Lord called Israel (v 12); Cyrus, who defeated Babylon (v 14); and the sent One (v 16b). (TLSB)

48:12 LISTEN – The Lord pleads with His people to listen to Him because all His words are words of grace and mercy, life and deliverance. (PBC)

called. † To be God’s chosen people. See 42:6; see also 41:2; 43:1 and notes. (CSB)

first and ... last. See 41:4 and note. (CSB)

Sets the Lord apart from any god, man, or event that would seek to compete with Him. (TLSB)

“I have been there in the past and will be there hereafter.” This you heard above. “I was the God who made promises in the past, and I will be the One who acts; because I have freely promised, I will freely give. (Luther)

48:13 *laid the foundations ... spread out the heavens.* Isaiah often refers to God as Creator (see 40:21–22; 42:5; 51:13 and notes). Cf. Ps 102:25. (CSB)

That is, “I have heaven in My hand and enclosed in My hand. I have closed My fingers around it. Why do you not believe Me? Do you think that My hand has been shortened? Do you think I am so weak that I could not set you free? Just wait a little while, I still have enough strength to do justice to My promises. I am strong enough because I lay the foundation of the earth and hold the heavens in My hand.” (Luther)

Astrologers foolishly ask the stars what will happen next, while God holds the stars in His hand. (TLSB)

when I summon ... all stand up. All creation does God’s bidding (see 40:26 and note; Ps 103:22). (CSB)

The Lord arranges and orders the stars and knows all of them by name (Jb 38:31–32; Ps 147:4). (TLSB)

“I say to the sun and the moon, ‘Shine,’ and they stand forth. I say to the earth, ‘Germinate,’ and it stands forth. I say to the earth, ‘Bring forth and produce,’ and it stands forth.” (Luther)

48:14 *idols ... foretold.* See 41:21–23, 26; 43:9 and notes. (CSB)

None of the idols has the ability to foretell the future. None of them actually exists except in the imagination of misguided human minds. (PBC)

chosen ally. Cyrus the Great (see 41:2 and note). (CSB)

As the Lord “set His love on ... and chose” (Dt 7:7) the children of Israel to be “His servant” (Is 48:20), though they did not deserve this distinction (cf Dt 4:37; 7:6–8), so He let Cyrus experience His favor for the purpose of liberating the chosen people (Is 45:1–6). (TLSB)

his purpose. See 46:10–11 and note. (CSB)

“This is My purpose; it is not your merit.” Therefore these words are placed in antithesis: “With My arm, not with your power.” (Luther)

Babylon. See 13:1 and note. (CSB)

48:15 *called him.* Cyrus (see 41:2 and note). (CSB)

will succeed. See 44:28; 45:1–4 and notes. (CSB)

From God’s perspective, and from the perspective of His prophet, the deliverance promised has already become a reality. (PBC)

48:16 *first announcement.* The prediction about Cyrus and his mission (see 41:25–27 and notes). (CSB)

not spoken in secret. See 45:19 and note. (CSB)

That is, “I do not speak uselessly, and in secret. My words are not empty, as are the words of those who speak into the trees. I did not speak in vain from of old. Long ago I uttered threats regarding the Babylonian captivity. I told you well in advance. (Luther)

And now. Cyrus is referred to in vv 14–15. In v 16, a new Servant who was sent “to seek and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10) suddenly speaks. Made flesh in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), the eternal Word (Jn 1:1) has more to say in the opening verses of ch 49 and in 50:4–6. and in 50:4–6. (TLSB)

has sent me, with his Spirit.† A reference to the servant of the Lord, who speaks this verse. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon the servant in 42:1 (see note there and 61:1 and note). In 42:1, here, and in 61:1 all three persons of the Trinity are referred to. (CSB)

The Servant will be sent, and He, with the Father, will send the Spirit (Jn 14:16–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7). (TLSB)

48:17 *Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.* See 41:14 and note. (CSB)

teaches you ... the way you should go. Through the prophets (see 30:20–21 and notes; Ps 32:8). (CSB)

“Things of advantage to you for eternal life and everything good.” (Luther)

48:18 *peace ... like a river, righteousness like the waves.* Abundant and overflowing peace and righteousness (see 45:8 and note; Am 5:24 and note). Peace and righteousness are also linked in 9:7; 32:17; 54:13–14; 60:17; Ps 85:10; Heb 7:2. (CSB)

Unlike occasional flow of a seasonal stream. Amos employs this same metaphor when he calls Israel to let justice and righteousness flow like a perennial spring (Amos 5:24) (TLSB)

48:19 *descendants ... like the sand.*† See 10:22; see also Ge 13:16 and note; Ge 22:17; Jer 33:22 and note; Ro 4:16; 9:6–9; Gal 3:29. (CSB)

Abraham, Israel’s ancestor and the father of all believers, was promised countless offspring (Gn 13:16; 15:5; 17:5–6; Rm 4:16; 9:6–8; Gal 3:29).

name ... never be cut off.† Israel’s name would not be completely obliterated. (CSB)

48:20 *Leave Babylon, flee.* Although the Jews did not have to flee (see 52:12), they were encouraged to depart quickly because of the judgment coming on Babylon (cf. Rev 18:4). This is the last mention of Babylon by name in Isaiah. (CSB)

Complete and permanent severance from “the way of sinners” and “the seat of scoffers” is required (Ps 1:1; cf Rv 18:4–5). (TLSB)

shouts of joy. See 44:23; 49:13; 52:9 and notes. (CSB)

That is, “when you will have been set free, then offer to God a song and a sacrifice of praise.” (Luther)

ends of the earth. See 11:12; 42:10 and notes. (CSB)

So vociferously are they to make their proclamation that it will resound to the end of the earth. (Leupold)

redeemed. See 43:1 and note. (CSB)

his servant. See 41:8–9 and note. (CSB)

48:21 *did not thirst ... water ... from the rock.* † A reference to God's provision after the exodus (see Ex 17:6 and note; Nu 20:11; see also Isa 32:2; 35:6; 43:19; 49:10 and notes). (CSB)

Thus the prophets habitually combined their songs and thanksgiving with the miracles of the past. (Luther)

48:22 Repeated almost verbatim in 57:21. (CSB)

peace. See 39:8 and note. (CSB)

wicked. Those who rebel against the Lord (see note on 1:2). (CSB)

If you will believe, you will have peace. If you will not believe, you will be without peace. This passage is properly applied to the captive Jews, who in their unbelief refused to believe. Consequently they shall have no good fortune or prosperity. With the Hebrews *peace* means prosperity and joy, good fortune and well-being. (Luther)

48:12–22 The Lord distinguishes His people from the nations and promises enduring peace through His Servant and His Spirit. This promise was fulfilled for your sake by Jesus of Nazareth (Mt 11:27–30). • Lord Jesus, grant me Your Spirit to sustain me in God's peace. Amen. (TLSB)