

**Commentary on Isaiah 48:14-19, 21-22**  
**By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, January 16 , 2011**, is from **Isaiah 48:14-19, 21-22**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **[International Bible Lessons](http://internationalbiblelessons.org)** can be read at: <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>. The lesson is also published each Saturday morning in [The Oklahoman](#).

**Isaiah 48:14-19, 21-23**

**14 Assemble, all of you, and hear! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he shall perform his purpose on Babylon, and his arm shall be against the Chaldeans.**

God called the Hebrews to assemble to teach them that their idols could not predict the future or bring prophecies to fulfillment. The LORD loves Jacob [which includes the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Jews of the Southern Kingdom (Judah)]. Therefore, He would do what was best for their discipline, to lead them to repentance and faithful obedience to Him. God used the Babylonians and their exile of the Jews to achieve His goals. God would also free them from exile at the

predicted time (after 70 years according to the prophet Jeremiah).

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

The "him" referred to is Jacob [the Israelites and the Jews who were his descendants]. God spoke and called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God said, "out of Egypt I have called my son," when He led the 12 tribes out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. God enabled the Hebrews to prosper and defeat their enemies and inhabit the land, but they turned away from God to the idols of their neighbors and the nations God defeated before them.

**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.**

Perhaps Isaiah is speaking about God and himself here, for from the beginning Isaiah had not spoken in secret, but had told the people God's word, for God did not want His word spoken in secret, as dangerous as that had been for Isaiah. The LORD God had sent Isaiah, and His Spirit had gone with Isaiah as he preached. We can also say that God did not create the world in secret, but revealed His truth in the beginning by speaking the world into being and creating the world in the light. From before the

beginning, God has been and always will be. In thinking ahead and speaking through Isaiah, just as He sent Isaiah to speak openly, the LORD God also sent Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, and His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to speak openly. Isaiah's words can apply to God, to his work for God, to the Messiah that God the Father would send, and to the Holy 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.**

The LORD redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt and from exile in Babylon. The LORD was their Redeemer then, as He always had been. Later, God the Father would send Jesus, His only Son, as Redeemer, Lord, and Savior. Just as the LORD taught the Hebrews for their own good, so Jesus' words in the Bible teach and lead us today (especially when we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit).

**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;**

God laments the fact that His people did not obey His commandments. Abundant success and prosperity would have been the consequence of obedience for them. As a general rule, success and prosperity (surely

spiritual success and prosperity) follow righteousness, as in the case of Job, but not always throughout one's whole life as in the case of Job; for, God wants us to obey Him because we love God and He is worthy to be loved, rather than for the things our loving God can give us.

**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.**

God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand and the stars. All who trust in the true God through faith in Jesus Christ are among these descendants. If the Israelites and the Jews had obeyed God, they would have had far more descendants, for many died as punishment for their sins. Many were killed in battle because the idols they prayed to were powerless to save them, and God would not share His honor with these idols to which they prayed. The ungodly died in judgment, but God did save a remnant for His name's sake. Teaching on the remnant is very important in Isaiah.

**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.**

This verse does describe the Exodus and the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. If the people had not rebelled against God in the wilderness, they would all have entered the Promised Land forty year earlier, and there would have been far more descendants. Even under God's judgment in the wilderness, God did provide for His people, especially water, essential for life. In a similar fashion, in spite of their rebellious past, God would lead His chastened people back to Judah from exile and provide for them along the way to Jerusalem.

## **22 "There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."**

This universal truth is also a general rule, for innocent people have sometimes been attacked by the wicked. But if attacked, believers can still have peace with God. The wicked have no peace whatsoever. People who are wicked may so harden their conscience that it will not longer accuse them of wrongdoing, but they will suffer lack of peace in some way. Whether the wicked feel a sense of peace or not, they will not have peace with God or others. Fear and uncertainty may also afflict the wicked, and unless they repent they will never find peace on earth or hereafter.

### **Five Questions for Discussion**

1. Why does God punish or discipline His people rather than make excuses for their sins and not

punish them as they deserve? How can a person avoid God's punishment? What does it cost God to redeem the person He does not punish as they deserve?

2. Today, does God still punish those who say they believe in Him? Why or why not? Give a reason for your answer.

3. Why does God insist that He has not spoken in secret? Since God has not spoken in secret, what kind of responsibility do people have to obey God?

4. Why does God want to teach and lead us? Why is it important for us to share God's reasons with others? In what ways does God teach and lead us today?:

5. Read verse 22 again. In what ways do you find this verse to be true today? How might you explain the truths this verse reveals to someone who is constantly disobeying God and not following the teachings of the Bible?

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