

ISAIAH - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. Who was Isaiah? What was new, outstanding, or especially emphasized in the book of Isaiah? Does reading Isaiah through one more time improve our picture of God? What were the major events of the time that precipitated the prophecies in the book? Why do you think Isaiah is called the “gospel” prophet? Why do some people think that several authors contributed to the book of Isaiah? What are the arguments for both sides? What messages did Isaiah have for the people of his time?

Isaiah lived in a very tumultuous time in Bible history. During his ministry in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, their northern brothers of the Kingdom of Israel were invaded, conquered and scattered by the Assyrians (723/722 BC) never to be heard from again. The Assyrians also invaded Judah (701 BC) and it seemed there was no possibility that the same fate would not overcome Judah, until Hezekiah and Isaiah led the people to turn to God and after the Assyrians blasphemed the name of God (Isaiah 36; 2 Kings 18) God destroyed 185,000 men of their army without the people of Judah fighting at all. (1 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36) This completely changed the course of human history as the Assyrians, with their capital at Nineveh, at that point were the most powerful nation in the world.

Isaiah was a member of the royal household and was called as a prophet when still quite young (5T 749, see appendix) somewhere between the years 750 and 739 BC. His period of work extended for 60 years during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Isaiah was put into a hollow log and sawed in two by King Manasseh very early in Manasseh's reign (about 686 BC; 2 Kings 21:16; Hebrews 11:37).

“AUTHOR: Isaiah

“The problem of the unity of Isaiah is inextricably related to the question of the book's authorship, and has been the focus of more scholarly discussion than any other single question regarding the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Since the denial of Isaianic authorship of chapters 40–66 in 1775, critical scholars have generally considered the book as two separate works; and in 1892, the work was further divided. Chapters 40–55 were designated ‘Deutero-Isaiah,’ written in Babylon in 549–538 B.C., and chapters 56–66 were called ‘Trito-Isaiah,’ written by another unknown author in Palestine in 460–445 B.C. Isaianic authorship was also denied for the following passages: 11:10–16; 12:1–6; 13:1–14:23; 15:1–16:12; 21:1–10; 24:1–27:13; 34:1–35:10; 36:1–39:8; 40:1–66:24—a total of almost two-thirds of the book.

“Although the arguments are impressive to some, each has been persuasively challenged by conservative scholars who maintain the unity of Isaianic authorship for the entire book:

(1) The tradition of one Isaiah appears as early as the apocryphal Ecclesiasticus 49:17–22 ©. 185 B.C.).

(2) The superscription in Isaiah 1:1 stands for the entire book.

(3) All parts (i.e., Isaiah 1–39; 40–55; 56–66) bear marks of Isaiah’s style.

(4) It is impossible to be satisfied with only three divisions if the stylistic criterion is consistently applied.

(5) Some of the questioned chapters (i.e., Isaiah 36–39) serve as a bridge between the earlier Assyrian and the later Babylonian periods; hence, to deny Isaianic authorship for these is to leave the two greater parts of the book (i.e., Isaiah 1–35 and 40–66) without a literary and historical transition.

(6) New Testament references attest to Isaianic authorship for the whole (cf. Matt. 3:3; 8:17; 12:17; Luke 3:4; 4:17; John 1:23; 12:38; Acts 8:28; Rom. 10:16–20), and Jesus attests that Isaiah wrote 53:4 (Matt. 8:17), 44:1 (Matt. 12:17), 61:1 (Luke 4:17), and 53:1 (John 12:38).

(7) The literary unity is attested by the frequency of such words as ‘thornbush,’ ‘delusions,’ ‘dross,’ which occur in both sections. ‘Holy One of Israel’ is used twelve times in Isaiah 1–39 and thirteen times in Isaiah 40–66, but only six times in all the rest of the Old Testament.

(8) Passages in Zechariah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Nahum reflect upon Isaiah 40–66, indicating that this part was in existence at the time of their prophetic work.

(9) The author of Isaiah 40–66 is a Palestinian who is not familiar with Babylon, but who speaks familiarly of Jerusalem (Isaiah 41:19; 44:14). In fact, ‘all you ends of the earth’ and ‘from a far country’ are clearer when spoken from a Palestinian viewpoint than from a Babylonian one (Isaiah 45:22; 46:11), and the expression ‘from there’ does not suggest a Babylonian origin (Isaiah 52:11).

“It has been maintained traditionally that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who prophesied in Jerusalem during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, is the author of the book which bears his name. Tradition states that Isaiah, born in 760 B.C., was a brother of Amaziah of Judah. This would make him a cousin of the kings previously named, during whose reign he prophesied. Isaiah (*yeshayahu*, Heb.), whose name means ‘the LORD saves,’ or ‘salvation of YAHWEH,’ was a younger contemporary of both Amos and Hosea. He was married to a woman called ‘the prophetess’ (Isaiah 8:3) who bore him two sons, whose names are object lessons: (1) ‘Shear-Jashub’ (Isaiah 7:3), literally ‘A Remnant Shall Return,’ meaning that out of God’s judgment a remnant would be saved; and (2) ‘Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz’ (Isaiah 8:3), literally ‘Speed the Spoil, Hasten the Booty,’ signifying the removal of Syria and Israel as enemies of Judah by the Assyrians (Isaiah 8:4). His call came in the year that King Uzziah died, c. 740 B.C. (Isaiah 6:1).

“DATE: c. 740-680 B.C.

“It has generally been held that Isaiah began his ministry in the last year of Uzziah’s reign, 792 (767)-740 B.C., and continued at least until shortly after the invasion by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. (Isaiah 36:1). This would mean that his active ministry spanned a period of about forty years. However, in Isaiah 37:38 Isaiah records the death of Sennacherib, which occurred in 681 B.C., indicating that Isaiah outlived Hezekiah, who died in 686 B.C. This is confirmed by 2 Chronicles 32:32, where it is stated that Isaiah wrote the history of Hezekiah (Isaiah 36–39), thus extending his ministry into the reign of Manasseh, the successor of Hezekiah. According to Hebrew tradition, Isaiah suffered martyrdom by being sawn in two during the reign of the

wicked king Manasseh (cf. Heb. 11:37). The reign of Manasseh is not mentioned in the superscription; hence, Isaiah's visions were no doubt limited to the period of the kings listed therein, ending with Hezekiah, although his writings would extend to 681 B.C. (Isaiah 37:38). According to this view, the latter chapters of Isaiah (Isaiah 40–66) belong to the reign of Hezekiah after 701 B.C. and perhaps include a part of the reign of Manasseh.

“THEME: Judgment and Redemption

“The preaching of the prophets—especially Amos, with his emphasis upon the judgment of God, and Hosea, with his stress upon the love of God—provided background for and gave balance to the message of Isaiah. His message is presented against the background of Israel's greatest period of prosperity after the ‘Golden Age of Israel’ under David and Solomon. Prosperity, the promotion of agriculture, the enlargement of the kingdom, the strengthening of the fortifications of Judah, the reorganization of the army, and the commercial activities in Arabia and elsewhere precipitated immorality, excessive drinking, display of wealth, ritualism, idolatry, perversion of justice, oppression of the poor, false prophets, immoral priests, greed, hunger, and a great chasm between rich and poor. Therefore, Isaiah stressed

- (1) salvation by faith (Isaiah 7:9; 28:16; 30:15),
- (2) the holiness of God and ethical living (Isaiah 6:1–8; 37:23),
- (3) the offense of man's sins (Isaiah 1:2–4; 29:13–17),
- (4) the certainty of judgment (Isaiah 1–35), and
- (5) the assurance of redemption for a repentant remnant (Isaiah 1:9, 19; 10:19–22; 46:3, 4; 65:8–10).

“**Of all the books in the Old Testament, only the Psalms contain a larger number of messianic predictions than Isaiah.** Isaiah sets forth every aspect of the glory and ministry of Christ:

- (1) His incarnation (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6),
- (2) His youth (Isaiah 7:15; 11:1; 53:2),
- (3) His mild manner (Isaiah 42:2),
- (4) His obedience (Isaiah 50:5),
- (5) His message (Isaiah 61:1, 2),
- (6) His miracles (Isaiah 35:5, 6),
- (7) His sufferings (Isaiah 50:6),
- (8) His rejection (Isaiah 53:1–3),
- (9) His shame (Isaiah 53:4–6),
- (10) His vicarious death (Isaiah 53:10), and
- (11) His resurrection and ascension (Isaiah 52:13).” (*Believer's Study Bible*)

“One of the chief arguments of these critics for a composite authorship of Isaiah is that Isaiah 40–66 appear to them to be written, not from the standpoint of an author living at the close of the 8th century B.C., but from that of one who lived near the close of the Babylonian captivity. **The mention of Cyrus by name (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1) is regarded by them as conclusive evidence that these chapters were written during the time of Cyrus, that is, in the second half of the 6th century B.C. This concept, of course, is based on the**

a priori assumption that prophetic foreknowledge is impossible.

“The fact, however, that Isaiah mentions Cyrus is not an argument in favor of a late date for the book, but rather an evidence of the wisdom and foreknowledge of God. **Throughout the book there are predictions concerning the future.** Among these are prophecies of the fall of the rulers of Israel and Syria (Isaiah 7:7, 8, 16), of the overthrow of Tyre (Isaiah 23), of the dismay of Assyria (Isaiah 14:25; 31:8; 37:6, 7, 29, 33–35), of the humiliation of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4–23), of the folly of trusting in Egypt (Isaiah 30:1–3; 31:1–3), and of the work of Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1–4). Indeed, Isaiah sets forth God’s foreknowledge as eloquent testimony to His wisdom and power (Isaiah 41:21–23; 42:9; 43:9; 44:7, 8; 45:11, 21; 46:9, 10; 48:3, 5–8).” (*SDA Bible Commentary*)

“The messages in this book can be divided into three parts. The first part (Isaiah 1–39) is especially concerned about the Lord’s holiness and his power as king of the whole earth. As a holy king, the Lord was angry about evil in Judah. Government officials were corrupt; violence and injustice were everywhere. The Lord said he was going to have Assyria and Babylonia punish the people of Judah and other nations. But the Lord offered his people hope for the future, if they turned back to him and trusted him to protect their nation.

“In the second part (Isaiah 40–55) the Lord spoke to people who had been punished (Isaiah 40:1–2). They were discouraged, and he offered them hope. But the Lord wanted them to understand that idols have no power, and that he alone is the true God. If the people of Israel turned back to him, then he would rescue them from Babylonia and the other nations where they had been scattered. They would return to their own land, and he would bless them and make them prosperous. The Lord was able to make this tremendous promise to his people because he created and rules the entire earth.

“In the third part (Isaiah 56–66) the Lord promises an especially bright future for those who are faithful to him. And in this section, people from all nations are included, not just the people of Judah. These promises are like windows that allow a glimpse into a future time when the Lord will create a new world full of joy and free from suffering:

*I am creating new heavens
and a new earth;
everything of the past
will be forgotten.
Celebrate and be glad forever!
I am creating a Jerusalem,
full of happy people.
I will celebrate with Jerusalem
and all of its people;
there will be no more crying
or sorrow in that city.* (Isaiah 65.17–19) (CEV)

The Audience:

“As a prophet, Isaiah spoke to three historical epochs. In Isaiah 1–39, he delivered his message of condemnation to the eighth-century Israelites, pronouncing judgment on their immoral and idolatrous lifestyles. This judgment came quickly, for during Isaiah’s ministry,

Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.) set out to extend Assyria's rule into the west, and in doing so put pressure on Israel and Judah. In 722 B.C. another Assyrian king, Sargon II, conquered the northern kingdom. Only the nation of Judah was left. But Isaiah predicted that even Judah would fall—as much later it did, in 586 B.C.

“In Isaiah 40–55, Isaiah comforted the future generation of weary exiles—the Jews who thought that God had forgotten them (Isaiah 40:27). In a brilliant series of prophecies, Isaiah presented the case that **Israel's captivity was not due to the superiority of Babylon's idols, but to the disciplining rod of Israel's Lord** (Isaiah 42:23–25). He predicted the exiles' return and encouraged them to rouse themselves (Isaiah 52:1–10), to flee Babylon (Isaiah 48:20, 21), and to entrust their future to the Almighty (Isaiah 41:14–20).

“Finally in the third section (Isaiah 56–66), Isaiah exhorted the Jews who had returned to the land. This was the period before the temple was rebuilt (Isaiah 58:12; 61:4; 64:10) or perhaps while it was being rebuilt (Isaiah 66:1). Isaiah encouraged these Jews to put away greed (Isaiah 56:9–11), self-indulgence (Isaiah 56:12), idolatry (Isaiah 57:3–10), cynicism (Isaiah 57:11–13), and hypocritical self-righteousness (Isaiah 58:1–5). But he also predicted that the community would be split between true and false worshipers (see Isaiah 65; 66). The complete restoration of Israel was still to come (Isaiah 49:8–26). The promised Messiah would appear in the future (Isaiah 61:1–3). Then Gentiles would join Israel's godly remnant to become the ‘servants’ of the Lord (Isaiah 56:3; 65:1, 15, 16) in a new nation (Isaiah 65:1; 66:8). **The ultimate triumph of good over evil would have to await the new heaven and the new earth (Isaiah 65:17–19).**” (*Nelson Study Bible*)

“In Jotham's reign there was a war between Judah and the united kingdoms of Israel and Syria (the Syro-Ephraimite crisis of 734–732 B.C.; Isaiah 7–9). In this war Ahaz, the King of Judah, was opposed by a coalition of forces from Pekah, King of Israel, and Rezin, King of Aram or Syria. Ahaz responded with fear and unbelief. He refused God's sign (Isaiah 7:10) and tried to find a political solution.

“During the reign of Hezekiah, Judah and several other nations fought against Assyria under Sennacherib (705–681 B.C.). Sennacherib's response was to devastate the countryside of Judah and lay siege to Jerusalem itself. But unlike Ahaz, Hezekiah trusted in the Lord. He poured out his burden before God in prayer and trusted God's word through Isaiah (Isaiah 37:14–35).

“During the second half of the eighth century the prophet railed against the leaders for their hypocrisy (Isaiah 1:10–15), greed (Isaiah 5:8), self-indulgence (Isaiah 5:11), and cynicism (Isaiah 5:19). With these sins they were bringing the nation to moral ruin. God raised up Isaiah to announce their fate (Isaiah 6:11–13). As Isaiah predicted, Israel was exiled in 722 B.C., and Hezekiah barely escaped the Assyrian destruction (Isaiah 36:1–37:37).

“The exile of Israel in Babylon is the context of Isaiah's ministry of encouragement to the afflicted. In a brilliant series of wide-ranging, yet specific prophecies, **Isaiah predicts the fall of pagan Babylon (Isaiah 46:1–47:15) and the salvation of Israel's remnant. He names Cyrus, the Persian, as God's anointed agent to restore the remnant to the land more than a century before he came to power (Isaiah 44:24–45:13). He urges the remnant to flee from Babylon (Isaiah 48:20, 21). He challenges the people to renew their loyalty to the Lord when they return to the land (Isaiah 56:1–8) and to avoid falling back into**

acts of treachery (Isaiah 57:3–13).

“Beyond this immediate salvation Isaiah predicted the coming of a Servant and Savior much greater than Cyrus. This anonymous Servant would bring justice to the nations (Isaiah 42:1–4), establish Israel in a new covenant with the Lord (Isaiah 42:5–7), become a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 49:1–7), and take away the sins of His people (Isaiah 52:13–53:12). The Servant would suffer willingly to achieve these victories, and God would reward and vindicate Him (Isaiah 50:4–11). The New Testament identifies the Servant as Jesus Christ, the incarnate Lord.” (*New Geneva Study Bible*)

“The Book of Isaiah is directly quoted twenty-one times in the New Testament and attributed in each case to the prophet Isaiah. Some scholars who have difficulty with detailed prophetic prediction of future events have denied to Isaiah the authorship of Isaiah 40–66. They term this section Second Isaiah and insist that since these chapters deal with events that took place long after Isaiah’s day, such as the Babylonian captivity of Judah, the return from Exile, and the rise of Cyrus, the Persian ruler who mandated the return from Exile (Isaiah 45:1), they were written later and attached to Isaiah.

“If divine inspiration of Scripture and the possibility of the supernatural are accepted, however, one should have no difficulty with the unity of authorship of Isaiah. After all, Isaiah and other prophets of his time prophesied events in the life of Jesus that happened seven hundred years later. Furthermore, critics overlook the fact that Isaiah had access to the Book of Deuteronomy, which predicted both a captivity and a return from exile (Deut. 29; 30). If the mention of Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1) is a stumbling block, what about Bethlehem, Jesus’ birthplace, named and predicted by Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah (Micah 5:2)?

“Other arguments favor single authorship: 1) key words and phrases are equally distributed throughout Isaiah; 2) references to landscape and local coloring are also uniform. The greater beauty in style of Hebrew poetry in the latter chapters of Isaiah can be explained by the change in subject matter from judgment and entreaty to comfort and assurance. In any case, as clearly likely as it is that Isaiah was written via one penman, contending for this position is not intended to impugn the sincerity of any with contrary opinion.” (*Spirit Filled Life Study Bible*)

“The oldest Christian apocryphal apocalypse of the heavenly journey type is the **Ascension of Isaiah**. This work is probably a composite made up of two originally independent works, a Martyrdom of Isaiah and a Vision or Ascent of Isaiah. The latter is the apocalypse and is contained in chaps. 6–11 (Yarbro Collins 1979: 84). Isaiah’s journey is through the seven heavens and involves revelation of the different kinds of angels inhabiting each. The climax is a “prophecy” of the descent of “the Beloved” (Christ) through the seven heavens, his mission on earth, and his ascent back into the seventh heaven. In the present time it is the wicked angel Sammael and the angels of the firmament who determine events on earth. The strife on earth reflects the strife among the angels.” (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*)

2. As we begin to look at the prophets of the Bible, most of them seemed to work mainly for Judah. Doesn’t God seem partial?

God chose Jerusalem as His “capital city” long before David occupied it. Jerusalem was at one of the major crossroads of the world at the time. People from all nations were supposed

to come there and learn the truth about God. The northern kingdom of Israel left and severed themselves from allegiance to the household of David. It was not the household of David that forced them to leave. But God works with those who are in tune with Him no matter where they live throughout the world. It is true that we seem to have the most extensive records of God's dealings with the people and kings of Judah, but that appears to be because they were more willing to cooperate. Has God favored the Christian Church in the last two millennia? Has God favored the SDA Church in the last 150 years? If so, why?

3. Why would God say He is disgusted and tired of their religious festivals and sacrifices when He Himself had given them? (Isaiah 1:14-20; Jeremiah 7:21-23; Amos 5:25) Or did He? They were religious, but what kind of religion was it?

God apparently originally gave our first parents the sacrificial system in its simplest form back at the gates of the Garden of Eden after they had sinned.

“The sacrificial offerings were ordained by God to be to man a perpetual reminder and a penitential acknowledgment of his sin and a confession of his faith in the promised Redeemer. **They were intended to impress upon the fallen race the solemn truth that it was sin that caused death.** To Adam, the offering of the first sacrifice was a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which only God could give. It was the first time he had ever witnessed death, and he knew that had he been obedient to God, there would have been no death of man or beast. As he slew the innocent victim, he trembled at the thought that his sin must shed the blood of the spotless Lamb of God. **This scene gave him a deeper and more vivid sense of the greatness of his transgression, which nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate. And he marveled at the infinite goodness that would give such a ransom to save the guilty. A star of hope illumined the dark and terrible future and relieved it of its utter desolation.** *Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.1; *Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1908 par. 11

“**But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.”** John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.” *PP* 68.2; *LHU* 324.4; *AG* 15.3

“Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. There are many who have outgrown their advent faith. They are living for the world, and while saying in their hearts, as they desire it shall be, “My Lord delayeth His coming,” they are beating their fellow servants. They do this for the same reason that Cain killed Abel. Abel was determined to worship God

according to the directions God had given. This displeased Cain. He thought that his own plans were best, and that the Lord would come to his terms. Cain in his offering did not acknowledge his dependence upon Christ. He thought that his father Adam had been treated harshly in being expelled from Eden. The idea of keeping that sin ever before the mind, and offering the blood of the slain lamb as a confession of entire dependence upon a power outside of himself, was torture to the high spirit of Cain. Being the eldest, he thought that Abel should follow his example. When Abel's offering was accepted of God, the holy fire consuming the sacrifice, Cain's anger was exceedingly great. The Lord condescended to explain matters to him; but he would not be reconciled to God, and he hated Abel because God showed him favor. He became so angry that he slew his brother. *Testimonies to Ministers* 77.1-78

"To fallen man was revealed the plan of infinite sacrifice through which salvation was to be provided. Nothing but the death of God's dear Son could expiate man's sin, and Adam marveled at the goodness of God in providing such a ransom for the sinner. **Through the love of God, a star of hope illumined the terrible future that spreads before the transgressor. Through the institution of the typical system of sacrifice and offering, the death of Christ was ever to be kept before guilty man, that he might better comprehend the nature of sin, the results of transgression, and the merit of the divine offering. Had there been no sin, man would never have known death.** (See Hebrews 10:1-4) **But in the innocent offering slain by his own hand he beheld the fruits of sin—the death of the Son of God in his behalf. He sees the immutable character of the law he has transgressed, and confesses his sin; he relies upon the merits of the Lamb of God.** . . . TMK 17.2; *Bible Echo*, July 15, 1893 par. 6; *ST*, February 20, 1893 par. 1

Unfortunately, as we very well know from reading Scripture, the true meaning of the sacrifices was soon almost entirely lost sight of. People began to think that sacrifices were some kind of payment for their sins. Thus, if a person was wealthy enough to offer frequent sacrifices it was thought that he must have a great relationship with God. Worse than that, some even came to believe that God was angry about sin. They believed that God must somehow be appeased and the sacrifices were viewed as an "atonement" or a means of appeasing this wrathful God. Over time, pagan religions began to add many other meanings to their sacrifices.

The Jewish people even came to believe that God would not accept them without the shedding of sacrificial blood. Thus the original intention of the sacrificial system was essentially eliminated from their thinking. However, they still believed that it was necessary to offer these sacrifices even if they were not entirely sure of the reason why. To their minds it was "necessary" to shed the sacrificial blood.

"As Jesus came into the temple, He took in the whole scene. He saw the unfair transactions. **He saw the distress of the poor, who thought that without shedding of blood there would be no forgiveness for their sins.** He saw the outer court of His temple converted into a place of unholy traffic. The sacred enclosure had become one vast exchange." *Desire of Ages* 157.2

As we can see from this passage, the original idea that had impressed Adam so much had been completely lost sight of. So it *is* correct to say that what God originally had in mind when He gave the “sacrificial system” outside the gates of the garden of Eden was not what they believed He had given them. Yahweh must have been very tired of the corrupt practices that they were using to “worship” Him! This is no doubt why He said what He did in these very important passages in Isaiah, Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, etc.

4. Do “inspired” writers ever indulge in plagiarism?

Compare Isaiah 2:2-4 with Micah 4:2,3.

Compare Isaiah 36:1 with 2 Kings 18:13.

Compare Isaiah 37 with 2 Kings 19.

Ninety percent of Mark is copied in either Matthew or Luke.

Most of Jude is in 2 Peter.

See ***MICAH - A TEACHER’S GUIDE #5; MARK - A TEACHER’S GUIDE #2; LUKE - A TEACHER’S GUIDE #3; JUDE - A TEACHER’S GUIDE #3.***

There are several approaches that have been taken to this question. Some want to dismiss the question by saying that if God is the author of all of Scripture then He can ask any writer to put down anything He wants him to, since it all is God’s thought anyway. Others, recognizing that the laws of plagiarism were not the same in Bible times as they are now, choose to ignore the issue.

It is important to note that none of the Bible writers claims that all of their material is original. They were much more concerned about spreading the truth as far and wide as possible and may have felt that the use of some particularly pertinent portions of another writer’s material was just what they needed to give extra “punch” to what they wanted to say.

It is also quite possible that in some cases what we find in Scripture is that two or more writers quote material that they have gotten from a third source. In some cases it may have been a part of a well-known song or poem that people often quoted. Their audiences may have immediately recognized the original source of the material and thought nothing more about it.

In our day, laws being what they are, it is much more important to give proper credit for material that has been quoted from another author. When we do this it is important also to give ultimate credit to the original source—hopefully, God Himself.

But, honestly, if the material is God-given, and intended for the entire world to teach them about God and the great controversy and how He chooses to run His government, shouldn’t it be spread as far and wide as possible, as fast as possible? If you should happen to get into heaven and then discover that the “truth” that appealed to you and thus led to your salvation was “plagiarized” by one author from another, will you demand that he be “punished” for not giving proper credit or perhaps even be punished for not developing original materials of his own? Would the original author demand that the one who had “plagiarized” his material and all those who benefitted from it be expelled from heaven? Or would all such people be excluded from heaven because the source of their “truth” was not “pure?” How many people have used and modified ideas that they have derived from Bible writers down through the centuries without so much as mentioning where the ideas came from? Are we supposed to assume that anyone who talks about God has somehow developed an original stream of truth

from which he is drawing? Solomon certainly didn't see it that way! He claimed that "nothing is new under the sun!" (Ecclesiastes 1:9,10)

5. Isaiah 5:1-7 gives a magnificent description of a vineyard (compare Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19). But something went wrong. What was it? Isaiah 5:12,13 says there was a lack of "knowledge." What knowledge was it they lacked? (Compare Hosea 4:1,2,6) Does Isaiah 1:3 actually suggest that the ox and ass know what they are supposed to know, but "my people do not know"? Later when things are right again in Isaiah 11:9 (compare Habakkuk 2:14) it says "...for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Is this the essential knowledge? What is suggested by Isaiah 29:13 as to the kind of worship that God wants? (compare Matthew 15:7-9 and Romans 12:1-2) Does the quality of our worship reveal the kind of Person we believe our God to be? If God is the extremely intelligent Being described in Isaiah 40:10-31, how do you approach a God like that?

Isaiah 5:12,13: ¹² And harp, and psaltery, tabret, and pipe, And wine, have been their banquets, And **the work of Jehovah they behold not, Yea, the work of His hands they have not seen.** ¹³ **Therefore my people removed without knowledge,** And its honourable ones are famished, And its multitude dried up of thirst. *Young's Literal Translation*

¹² At your feasts you have harps and tambourines and flutes—and wine. But **you don't understand what the Lord is doing,** ¹³ and so you will be carried away as prisoners. Your leaders will starve to death, and the common people will die of thirst. (*GNB*)

¹² At your drinking parties you have the music of stringed instruments, tambourines, and flutes. **But you never even think about all the LORD has done,** ¹³ **and so his people know nothing about him.**" (*CEV*)

"Jesus (Matthew 15:8,9; Mark 7:6,7) quotes Isaiah 29:13 as the epitome of Pharisaism. The prophet condemns his own people for honoring God with their **mouth** and **lips** but not their **heart**. He further notes that their **fear** or reverence was merely an intellectual accommodation **taught by the precept of men**. True worship must begin with a proper reverence for God and His Word." (*Believer's Study Bible*)

"Men had well-nigh lost the knowledge of the true God. Their minds were darkened by idolatry. For the divine statutes, which are 'holy, and just, and good' (Romans 7: 12), men were endeavoring to substitute laws in harmony with the purposes of their own cruel, selfish hearts. Yet God in His mercy did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man." *Prophets and Kings* 15.2

"Had Israel heeded the messages of the prophets, they would have been spared the humiliation that followed. It was because they had persisted in turning aside from His law that God was compelled to let them go into captivity. 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,' was His message to them through Hosea. 'Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee: . . . seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God.'" Hosea

4:6. *Prophets and Kings* 297.1

“God’s glory, His character, His merciful kindness and tender love--that which Moses had pleaded in behalf of Israel--were to be revealed to all mankind. And this promise of Jehovah was made doubly sure; it was confirmed by an oath. As surely as God lives and reigns, His glory should be declared ‘among the heathen, His wonders among all people.’ Psalm 96:3.

“It was concerning the future fulfillment of this prophecy that Isaiah had heard the shining seraphim singing before the throne, ‘The whole earth is full of His glory.’ Isaiah 6:3. The prophet, confident of the certainty of these words, himself afterward boldly declared of those who were bowing down to the images of wood and stone, ‘They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.’” Isaiah 35:2. *Prophets and Kings* 313.1,2

If we could fully comprehend all that God intends and wants to do in our world today, how much difference would it make? It is only by getting to know God and then being transformed by that relationship that we have a chance to be truly healed and saved. But if we really focus on Him with a desire to know Him better, the transformation will take place even without our realizing it. It is by beholding that we are changed into His likeness.

2 Corinthians 3:18: “All of us, then, reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces; and that same glory, coming from the Lord, who is the Spirit, transforms us into his likeness in an ever greater degree of glory.” *Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

“It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.” *Great Controversy* 555.1

6. Isaiah had a tremendous vision of God in His glory and a contrasting vision of Satan and his goals (Isaiah 6:1-8; 14:4-15). Who else saw this contrast? See Ezekiel 1, 28:1-19; Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest and Satan accusing him (Zechariah 3:1-5); Moses, the author of Job, saw something similar (Job 1, 2, 38-42); John in the Revelation (1, 12-14). What do these prophets, who saw both God and Satan, teach us about the issues that face us? What was Lucifer’s original position? What has he been primarily trying to accomplish since the very beginning of his rebellion (see Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:8-9; Revelation 13:5-8)?

In order to understand many things that happen in our world it is essential to realize that we are in the midst of a great controversy between good and evil, God and the Devil. We must also understand what that controversy is about. Satan wants to destroy God’s reputation so that we will no longer trust Him. Ultimately, Satan would like to take God’s place. God, by contrast, understands that it is impossible to run a universe at peace unless everyone is convinced of the absolute necessity of trust, love, and a humble willingness to listen. Furthermore, God is not willing to use force to get our cooperation. Those who are not willing to do things God’s way because they have not fully recognized its superiority cannot be allowed to be a part of His future kingdom. The Devil uses deceit, force, lies, and every other

evil device to confuse and mislead people to get them to join his side. God can only use truth and love to win people to His side. People must be willing to take the time and effort necessary to carefully study and weigh the evidence on both sides and then have the courage to do what is right because it is right.

God could take everyone to heaven if He were willing to spend the rest of eternity serving as a universal policeman running here and there stopping all the fights and misunderstandings, or perhaps He could put us all in solitary confinement cells so we could not hurt or annoy each other! But this is not God's idea of heaven. He wants a universe full of people who do what is right because it is right. There will be no police or jails in the New Jerusalem. God refuses to run that kind of a government.

7. Who is the baby referred to in Isaiah 7:14? Look at the context of this verse in Isaiah 7:1,10-16; 8:1-3. But who is the baby referred to in Isaiah 9:6? Do we have two virgin births in the Bible? How could Matthew explicitly say that Mary's giving birth was to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy? Have we lost our best Messianic prophecy? Or could this prophecy have two different fulfillments? There are other places where Isaiah and others begin by describing a local individual and then expanding their prophecy to someone much greater. Does Isaiah 14:4-15 describe the King of Babylon or Lucifer? Does Ezekiel 28:2-19 describe the Prince of Tyre or Lucifer?

“Isaiah 7:14 >*Almah* (Heb.) is one of two words translated as ‘virgin.’ The other term, *betulah* (Heb.), is very specific, only meaning ‘virgin,’ whereas >*almah* is more general and can sometimes mean ‘a young woman of marriageable age.’ The ambiguity of this term is reflected in its being translated ‘virgin’ in some places and ‘maiden’ in others. It has been maintained that the seven uses of this word in the Old Testament (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Psalms 68:25; Proverbs 30:19; Song of Solomon 1:3; 6:8; Isaiah 7:14) all have the meaning of ‘virgin.’ This view is supported by the fact that translators of the *LXX* chose the Greek word *parthenos*, which means ‘virgin,’ to translate >*almah*. In view of the importance of this verse to the New Testament doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, it is puzzling why Isaiah chose the ambiguous term, >*almah*, over the more frequent and specific one, *betulah*. The answer may be related to vv. 16, 22, which suggest a double fulfillment to the prophecy. The prophet may have used >*almah* instead of *betulah* because the impending birth which would be a sign to Ahaz would not be a virgin birth, but the future birth of Immanuel would be the Virgin Birth. The virgin birth of Jesus is essential to faith because only through this miracle can Christ (1) be fully God and fully Man simultaneously; (2) be the ‘New Adam’; (3) be sinless and perfectly obedient to the law of God on behalf of sinners; and (4) be the payment for sins as One who is both God and Man. The term ‘Immanuel’ (‘God with us’) was not meant as a proper name but as a description of the Person and work of the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6; 11:1–10).” (*Believer's Study Bible*)

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.’ During the Christmas season, this verse becomes a part of our common vocabulary (Isaiah 7:14): Most Christmas pageants recite the verse, and pastors explain the meaning of Immanuel, ‘God with Us.’ How the prophecy was fulfilled in the birth of Christ is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 1:23). But there are still questions that surround this prophecy. For

instance, how could the birth of Jesus be a sign to Ahaz?

“Sometimes unraveling Biblical prophecy can be difficult. This is one of those cases; Christians have interpreted this prophecy in several different ways. Some have thought the anonymous ‘virgin’ may refer to a royal mother—more specifically Ahaz’s wife. Thus the child would be Hezekiah, Ahaz’s successor. Hezekiah would be a sign to Ahaz that God was in control: The Lord was with Ahaz; He would save Judah from the enemies that surrounded Ahaz, enabling his son to inherit the throne (Isaiah 7:1–3). Yet the reference to the child eating ‘curds and honey’ was a prediction of Assyria’s eventual domination of Judah.

“Others have identified Isaiah’s wife, ‘the prophetess’ of 8:3, as the ‘virgin.’ She was ‘a young woman of marriageable age’, another meaning of the Hebrew word translated *virgin*. The child in this case would be Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. According to this view, the child’s two names, Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz meaning ‘Speed the Spoil, Hasten the Booty,’ and Immanuel meaning ‘God with Us,’ symbolize judgment and salvation. In fact, Isaiah himself described his children as ‘signs’ to the nation (see Isaiah 8:18), and he delivered a similar prophecy for this son (compare Isaiah 7:16 with 8:4).

“Some cite the parallel between the prophecy that a ‘virgin shall conceive’ and Jesus’ miraculous birth as evidence that this prophecy was fulfilled only in Jesus. Mary was the virgin mother; and the birth of Jesus was the sign of God’s salvation. His name would be Immanuel, ‘God with Us,’ because Jesus was the Son of God and He lived among us (Matt. 1:23). According to this view, Isaiah’s prophecy had no fulfillment prior to Jesus’ birth (Matt. 1:18–25).

“It is not uncommon for biblical prophecies to have one level of fulfillment in the immediate future, and a final fulfillment many years later in the person and work of the Savior, Jesus. Thus the pregnancy of Isaiah’s new wife and the birth of her son (8:3) could have been a sign to King Ahaz. However, this would have been a fulfillment, not *the* fulfillment. The prophecy was completely fulfilled in the coming of God’s only Son to the earth. He is the only Child who can truly be called Wonderful, Counselor, and Prince of Peace (see 9:6).” (*Nelson Study Bible*)

“Isaiah 7:14 Two Hebrew words can be translated virgin. ‘*Almah* (Heb.) is the more general term, designating a young woman of marriageable age. *Bethulah* (Heb.) is a very specific word for ‘virgin,’ though not used exclusively in this way. However, in all its Old Testament usages, the word can be, though does not have to be, translated in this way. Isaiah’s use of ‘*almah* indicates a double fulfillment of this prophecy. Isaiah’s son Shear-Jashub was a sign to Ahaz (Isaiah 7:3,4) and the child Immanuel (Heb., lit. ‘God with us’) was a sign to the whole world (Isaiah 7:14–16). The emphasis fell on the promise of God’s presence in times of crisis. This promise ultimately was fulfilled in Christ (Matt. 1:22, 23).” (*Woman’s Study Bible*)

A careful reading of Isaiah 7-9 should make it clear that the original “sign” given to King Ahaz was the birth of Maher-shalal-hash-baz, Isaiah’s second son. But there is no way that this child fulfills the predictions spelled out in Isaiah 9. That Son was none other than the true Messiah—the Eternal Father, the Wonderful Counselor, the Prince of Peace.

8. Is it apparent from this book how God feels about a people who would rather go to diviners and soothsayers, consulting the “dead” on behalf of the living, than come to Him? What does

God do with such people? (Isaiah 8:11-9:7)

God knew very well what people in Isaiah's day thought about their "gods". "Gods" were normally metal or wood objects that were supposed to represent some powerful force above and beyond the idol itself. But the important thing about the "idols" was that men could manipulate the "idols" and take them where they wanted them and even carry them into battle. Man has always longed for the power of a "god" that he could control. But, by contrast, we are almost never comfortable with a God who is above our power to manipulate. We try every means imaginable to "manipulate" our "God", but God does what is right despite our manipulations! Think of all the modern Christian attempts by people like TV evangelists to get God to listen to their words and perform "miracles." Others believe that if we get a group together and pray earnestly for some important thing, following the right "formula" in our prayers, God will do just what we want Him to! All such attempts put us back with the people in Isaiah's day, trying to manipulate our God! Even the "dead" can be manipulated to someone's advantage! Look at what Satan accomplished through the witch of Endor. (1 Samuel 28:3-25)

Now God, on the other hand, is doing everything He can to reach us! He came down to live among us as a baby boy who was really none other than:

"Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace." *Isaiah 9:6, God's Word*

He reaches out to help us in our need. He lived among us in very unfavorable circumstances. He continues to dwell among us through His Holy Spirit. He is always ready to help, but He can only do this on His terms. We must come to Him in an attitude of humble willingness to listen. This is so hard for proud humans! (See 2 Chronicles 26:16; 32:25)

9. Compare Isaiah 11:6-7 and 65:25 with Isaiah 35:9. Will there be any lions in the New Earth or not? How do we explain these apparent "direct contradictions?"

If one were to interpret these verses very literally it would be an obvious contradiction. But look at the context and the evident meaning becomes clear. There will be no carnivorous beasts there! If lions eat straw like an ox, then they are no longer a threat like the "lions" that we know today. Others see this as having at least partially a metaphorical meaning, and remembering 1 Peter 5:8 where the Devil is described as a "roaring lion," rejoice in the fact that the Devil will not be there. So there will be "lions" there, but they will not be any danger to any of us.

10. Do you believe "Israel's sins will be forgiven only when the stones of pagan altars are ground up like chalk, and no more symbols of the goddess Asherah or incense altars are left" (Isaiah 27:9, GNB)?

The purified Israel will be fully reconciled to Yahweh when all the corrupting influences that have proved to be such a terrible curse to the nation have been removed and destroyed. This is not some arbitrary statement on God's part setting forth some demands that something be done, but rather a simple recognition that things will not be fully healed until all of these pagan influences are gone.

11. What is the meaning of Isaiah 28:9-13, 16 “here a little and there a little”? Is this intended to be a guide for how to use key texts in the Scripture?

Isaiah 28:9: ⁹ They complain about me. They say, “Who does that man think he’s teaching? Who needs his message? It’s only good for babies that have just been weaned! ¹⁰He is trying to teach us letter by letter, line by line, lesson by lesson.” (GNB)

“**Isaiah 28:9-10.** The speakers in verse 9 are probably the priests and prophets mentioned in verses 7-8. They were angry that Isaiah was treating them as if they were young **children**. They felt they were adults who could think for themselves; they had no need for someone to tell them what to do or think. So they mimicked Isaiah as if he were speaking ‘baby talk’ to them (v. 10). **Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule** (cf. v. 13) is a series of sounds in Hebrew (saw lasaw, saw lasaw, qaw laqaw, qaw laqaw). Mocking Isaiah’s messages, the leaders were acting as if he were an adult ‘lecturing’ a little child. **A little here, a little there** was a method used in teaching children, inculcating a little at a time. In other words they were refusing to take Isaiah’s words seriously. They wanted nothing to do with his message or his ministry.” (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*)

“In general, early SDAs followed the method of Scripture interpretation characteristic of conservative Protestantism, which viewed all Scripture as divinely inspired. To find truth, early SDAs believed it was necessary to compare all relevant Scripture passages. They pointed to Isa. 28:10, “line upon line; here a little, and there a little,” as authority for using the proof-text method. They were convinced that when correctly understood, the Bible is consistent throughout.” (*SDA Encyclopedia*)

For beginners this simple approach is good, but we must get beyond it when we claim to be adults and seek for a deeper understanding of Scripture. Surely we can do better than the mocking jeers of the drunken leaders of Jerusalem in Isaiah’s day! Let’s learn to take a full story or even a whole book at a time to get its larger picture and understand what God is trying to tell us through that author or book. It is much too easy to get confused and even to prove almost anything from Scripture by dividing it up into tiny pieces such as one verse at a time.

12. What will be the ultimate basis for peace, freedom and security? Isaiah 32:17 (GNB); Isaiah 64:5 (GNB); compare COL 97-98.

Isaiah 32:17: ¹⁷ The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.” (NIV)

“¹⁷ And this righteousness will bring peace. Quietness and confidence will fill the land forever.” (*New Living Translation*)

“¹⁷ **Because everyone will do what is right, there will be peace and security for ever.**” (GNB)

Isaiah 64:5: “⁵ You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?” (NIV)

⁵ You welcome those who cheerfully do good, who follow godly ways. But we are not godly.

We are constant sinners, so your anger is heavy on us. How can people like us be saved?" (NLT)

⁵ **You welcome those who find joy in doing what is right, those who remember how you want them to live.** You were angry with us, but we went on sinning; in spite of your great anger we have continued to do wrong since ancient times." (GNB)

"The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely--because he is required to do so--will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right--because right doing is pleasing to God." *Christ's Object Lessons* 97.3-98.0

Isn't God trying to tell us something of immense importance here? Only those who recognize the basis of His plans for eternity will fit in. God can only admit to His kingdom those who choose to do what is right because it is right. God cannot take any chance that rebellion will arise a second time. But He refuses to remove our freedom of choice. So the only way He can have such a universe is by excluding those who aren't willing to accept the principles on which it works.

13. Who is going to live in the everlasting fires in the end? What is this fire, anyway? Isaiah 33:10-16; Compare Isaiah 6:6,7; Exodus 24:17; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Revelation 14:9-11.

The common belief among Christians--that the wicked will suffer in everlasting hell-- seems to have arisen from the idea that the soul, being immortal (Satan's original lie: Genesis 3:4), continues to live on somewhere and something must be done with those who do not live the kind of lives that God wants here on this earth. Since it is believed that they cannot die, they must be sent somewhere other than heaven to live forever. This place has taken its name from the place of the dead, *Sheol* in Hebrew, *Gehenna* in Greek often described as being like the perpetually burning fires of the garbage dump outside Jerusalem.

The very first known discussion of a "Christian hell" is found in the New Testament Apocryphal book known as the *Apocalypse (or Revelation) of St. Peter*. "And some there were there hanging by their tongues; and these were they that blasphemed the way of righteousness, and under them was laid fire flaming and tormenting them. And there was a great lake full of flaming mire, wherein were certain men that turned away from righteousness; and angels, tormentors, were set over them." (Verse 22, page 509) In the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures as we know them there is nothing of such a view of hell anywhere.

Scripture teaches that God's presence is to the wicked a consuming fire.

Deuteronomy 4:24: "because the Lord your God is **like a flaming fire**; he tolerates no rivals." (GNB)

"He is **a devouring fire**, a jealous God." (*Living Bible*)

"for the Lord your God is **a consuming fire**, a jealous God." (*Goodspeed, NIV, NKJV*)

Hebrews 12:29. "...our God is a **consuming fire.**" (*Goodspeed, NIV, NKJV, Concordant*)

"...His presence is a **consuming fire.**" (*Clear Word*)

"...our God is an **all-consuming fire.**" (*Schonfield's Original*)

"...our God is a **devouring fire.**" (*NEB*)

"...our God is indeed an **all-devouring fire.**" (*Translator's*)

"...our God is a **burning fire.**" (*Phillips*)

"...our God is a **destroying fire.**" (*GNB*)

"**God himself is Fire!**" (*Message*)

Daniel 7:9,10. "While I was looking, thrones were put in place. One who had been living forever sat down on one of the thrones. His clothes were white as snow, and his hair was like pure wool. His throne, **mounted on fiery wheels, was blazing with fire, and a stream of fire was pouring out from it.** There were many thousands of people there to serve him, and millions of people stood before him. The court began its session, and the books were opened." (*GNB*)

Isaiah 33:14-16. "Who among us shall dwell with **devouring fire,**
Who among us shall dwell with **eternal flames?**"

He who walks uprightly, and speaks sincerely,
Who scorns the gain that is won by oppression,
Who keeps his hand free from the touch of a bribe,
Who stops his ears against hearing bloodshed,
And closes his eyes against looking on evil--
He will dwell on the heights,
His stronghold will be the rocky fastnesses;
His bread will be given to him, his water will be sure.
(*Smith/Goodspeed*)

vs. 14-16 "The sinful people of Zion are trembling with fright. They say, 'God's judgment is like a **fire that burns forever.** Can any of us survive a fire like that?' You can survive if you say and do what is right. Don't use your power to cheat the poor and don't accept bribes. Don't join with those who plan to commit murder or to do other evil things. Then you will be safe; you will be as secure as if in a strong fortress. You will have food to eat and water to drink." (*GNB*)

vs. 14-16 "Which of us can live with **devouring fire?**
Which of us can exist with **eternal flame?**
He who lives honestly and speaks sincerely,
Who scorns to profit by wronging others,
Who waves aside a bribe,
Who lends no ear to murderous plots
And contemplates no crime.
Such a man shall live above all harm,
Secure as someone in a rocky stronghold;

His bread provided, and his water sure.” (*Phillips*)

2 Thessalonians 2:8. “Then the Wicked One will be revealed, but when the Lord Jesus comes, he will kill him with the breath from his mouth and destroy him with **his dazzling presence.**” (*GNB*)

Exodus 24:17. “The dazzling light of the Lord’s presence came down on the mountain. To the Israelites the light looked **like a fire burning** on top of the mountain.” (*GNB*)

Deuteronomy 5:23-27. “When **the whole mountain was on fire** and you heard the voice from the darkness, your leaders and the chiefs of your tribes came to me and said, ‘The Lord our God showed us his greatness and **his glory** when we heard him speak from **the fire!** Today we have seen that it is possible for a man to continue to live, even though God has spoken to him. But why should we risk death again? That **terrible fire** will destroy us. We are sure to die if we hear the Lord our God speak again. Has any human being ever lived after hearing **the living God speak from a fire?** Go back, Moses, and listen to everything that the Lord our God says. Then return and tell us what he said to you. We will listen and obey.’” (*GNB*) [Compare Exodus 3]

Exodus 33:20-23. “I will not let you see my face, because no one can see me and stay alive, but here is a place beside me where you can stand on a rock. When **the dazzling light of my presence** passes by, I will put you in an opening in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take my hand away, and you will see my back but not my face.” (*GNB*)

Ezekiel 1:27,28. “Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something **like glowing metal** that looked **like fire all around within it**, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something **like fire**; and there was **a radiance around Him**. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of **the surrounding radiance**. Such was **the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord**. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.” (*NASB*)

2 Peter 3:10-12. “Yet the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. In that day **the heavens will vanish** in a tearing blast, **the very elements will disintegrate in heat** and **the earth and all its works will disappear.**” (*Phillips*)

“The Lord is coming in flaming fire **to take vengeance on** those sinners who know not God and obey not His gospel.” [2 Thessalonians 1:7,8] *Manuscript 5*, 1876 (“The Days of Noah,” cir. 1876); see Manuscript Releases 843, 963, 816; 10MR 265,367; 12MR 207-209; LDE 240,241.

“‘Then shall they that obey not the gospel be **consumed with the spirit of His mouth and be destroyed with the brightness of His coming.**’ 2 Thessalonians 2:8. Like Israel of old **the wicked destroy themselves**; they fall by their iniquity. By a life of sin, they have placed themselves so out of harmony with God, their natures have become so debased with evil, that **the manifestation of His glory is to them a consuming fire.**” *Great Controversy* 35-37 (1888); *Spirit of Prophecy* vol. 4, p. 36-38 (1884)

“The glory of His countenance, which to the righteous is life, will be to the wicked a consuming fire. Because of love rejected, grace despised, the sinner will be destroyed.”
Desire of Ages 600 (1898); compare 4SP 33; GC 32; DA 590; LDE 279

Isn't it clear from these passages that God is powerful? His power is at times described as "fire". It is also called His "glory". But to the wicked it is an awesome and consuming power. So why is it that a power that gives life to the righteous is to the wicked a consuming fire? This is one of the greatest unanswered questions of Scripture and Ellen White. How does sin change us? Is God's salvation of the righteous and destruction of the wicked in the end a natural result of some change that takes place in each individual because of their personal choices or some arbitrary act on God's part?

14. Why did God feel it was necessary to step in at the time of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem and slay the 185,000 Assyrians? (Isaiah 37:36; 2 Kings 19:35) Do you think Sennacherib's insults had anything to do with it? (Isaiah 37:17,23,35) Read the full story in Isaiah 36 & 37 or 2 Kings 18:13-19:37.

Sennacherib didn't seem to recognize that there was any difference between the mighty Creator Yahweh and all those other useless "gods" that the other nations worshiped. He believed that Yahweh could be overpowered just as easily as the "gods" of any other nation. But Yahweh realized that a distinction had to be made between Him and His power and the fate of His people here on this earth. Yahweh knew what His people had not yet recognized—that He would have to let them go into captivity soon. To the nations looking on this would be taken to mean that Yahweh was no more powerful than the "gods" of the other conquered nations around and certainly no match for the powerful "gods" of Assyria or Babylon their conquerors. But to those who cared to think about it, there could be no comparison between a God who delivered His people from Egypt by the plagues, completely overwhelming the "gods" of Egypt, (Exodus 12:12) opening a path for His people through the Red Sea, and helping them to conquer their enemies in unbelievable ways, and the other "gods" around. To prove that this "God" was no ordinary "god", He needed to do something dramatic enough to get the attention of all around and something that could not be explained by any other means. Slaying the army of Assyria who had so boastfully despised Him, was just such an opportunity.

15. Is it our mission, as suggested by Isaiah, to proclaim to the world, "Behold our God" (Isaiah 40:9-11)? What are we actually saying about our God today?

Isaiah 40:9-11: ⁹ Jerusalem, go up on a high mountain
and proclaim the good news!

Call out with a loud voice, Zion;

announce the good news!

Speak out and do not be afraid.

Tell the towns of Judah

that their God is coming!

¹⁰ The Sovereign Lord is coming to rule with power,
bringing with him the people he has rescued.

¹¹ He will take care of his flock like a shepherd;

he will gather the lambs together
and carry them in his arms;

he will gently lead their mothers. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

There is probably nothing more important that we can do than to correctly represent Yahweh to others. The question in the entire great controversy is to see and understand the truth about God and His adversary the Devil. In this connection, we need to find ways every day to point people to the God that can save them and wants to be an intimate part of their lives. But how do we point Him out in a world that hardly believes that He exists? We must ask them to take an unbiased look at the evidence. Faith must be based on evidence and that is the role of the Old and New Testaments of Holy Scripture. We believe that this "Bible" or "Book of Books" is God's main exhibit area for mankind. Look at it and ask what it says to you about Him. Don't make the mistake of coming with all sorts of *a priori* assumptions that discount much of what it says, but simply look at the evidence as it stands. Compare it to the historical evidence that is available. Consider what impact it seems to have on people's lives. Try it in your own life. See what impact it has on you. Then make a careful evaluation of the truthfulness of this information. That is all that God asks.

16. Look at Isaiah 43:25. "I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." (RSV) (Compare 37:35; 48:11) Is that good news? Will we be comfortable in the hereafter only because God has forgotten? Is the God we worship the kind of Person who could be trusted with the detailed knowledge of all the things we have ever done? When we get to heaven, how will Uriah treat David? Or will he not remember? Could we go to heaven and be trusted not to gossip about the sins of others? (Romans 1:29-31) When you are with influential friends, are you uncomfortable to have your mother near by? Do you think she would say anything to embarrass you? Does God ever embarrass His children? Could He?

Why would God say that He blots out our sins for His own name's sake?

Isaiah 43:25:

²⁵ "egwwejmi egwwejmi olejal eifwn ta; ajnomia sou kai; oujmh; mnhsqhsomai." *Septuagint*

²⁵ "I—I am He who is blotting out Thy transgressions for Mine own sake, And thy sins I do not remember." *Young's Literal Translation*

²⁵ "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." *The King James Version*

²⁵ "But I wipe away your sins because of who I am. And so, I will forget the wrongs you have done." *The Contemporary English Version*

²⁵ I alone am the one who is going to wipe away your rebellious actions for my own sake. I will not remember your sins anymore." *God's Word*

²⁵ And yet, I am the God who forgives your sins, and I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you." (GNB)

²⁵ I, yes, I alone am he who blots away your sins for my own sake and will never think of

them again.” *The Living Bible*

²⁵ “I—yes, I alone—am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again.” *The New Living Translation*

²⁵ “I, I it is who blot out your acts of revolt for my own sake and shall not call your sins to mind.” *New Jerusalem Bible*

“The method by which God blots out the sins of His people is not clear, but the removal of sins was not at the expense of God’s justice and His honor. The redemption is accomplished by Christ’s death and resurrection, satisfying divine justice in accordance with divine mercy. ‘For My own sake’ underscores the exclusion of human merit as a factor in salvation. Cf. also Jer. 31:34....

“The word translated ‘forgive’ (*salah*, Heb.) can mean ‘send away’ or ‘let go,’ and is one of several O.T. words for forgiveness (v. 34; 36:3; cf. Is. 55:7). Another term is *kaphar* (Heb.), basically meaning ‘to cover’ (Prov. 17:9; Is. 1:18) and most often associated with the various aspects of the atonement, which is impossible without God’s forgiveness. A third word is *nasaq* (Heb.), meaning ‘lift up or away’ (Gen. 50:17; Ex. 10:17). In the N.T. there are four Greek words rendered ‘forgive’: (1) *aphiemi*, meaning ‘send away’ or ‘let off’ (Mark 3:29; Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) and also rendered ‘liberty’ (Luke 4:18) or ‘remission,’ which indicates a permanent removal of deserved punishment and condemnation (Matt. 26:28; Mark 1:4; Luke 1:77; 3:3; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 10:43; Heb. 9:22; 10:18); (2) *paresis*, meaning ‘remission’ (Rom. 3:25); (3) *apoluo*, literally ‘to loose away from’ or ‘away from destruction’ (Luke 6:37); and (4) *charizomai*, meaning literally ‘be gracious to’ (Luke 7:43; 2 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). The latter word is enhanced by its relation to the noun *charis*, meaning ‘grace.’ Forgiveness is the demonstration of God’s mercy and grace (Ps. 86:5; 103:10, 11), the sovereign act of God which reflects His very nature. Sin breaks the fellowship between God and man just as it breaks the harmony among men. Fellowship is restored only through forgiveness. If God is willing to forgive man, how much more should man forgive man (cf. Matt. 6:12). Those who have been forgiven should then become the forgiving (Luke 7:40–47; 17:3, 4). Divine forgiveness is marked by its unlimited scope (cf. Ps. 78:38; Luke 17:3, 4), its absolute erasure of sins (cf. Ps. 103:12; Mic. 7:19; Heb. 10:17), its abundant and gracious pardon (cf. Is. 55:7), and its automatic forgetting simultaneous with forgiveness (cf. Is. 43:25; 44:22). Though human forgiveness is inferior to divine forgiveness, the pattern is available and worthy of imitation (Eph. 5:1). The fruits of forgiveness include (1) peace (Gal. 5:22), (2) healing (2 Chr. 30:18–20), (3) restoration (2 Cor. 2:7–10), and (4) cleansing (James 5:15, 16). The forgiveness of their sin will assure a personal relationship with YAHWEH. Likewise the law will not be relegated to written material only, but also will be known by the indwelling of the living Word in individual believers. In the new covenant it is God Himself that initiates and executes His blessings toward Israel. The people of God have hope in: (1) a coming day of restoration (v. 31); (2) personal fellowship with the living God (vv. 32, 33); and (3) the forgiveness of their sins (v. 34).” (*Believer’s Study Bible*)

God is never happy when His children are in trouble. He weeps to see them destroy themselves with sin. But He rejoices when it is possible to forgive, save, or heal them. God loves to treat us in the best possible way, but that doesn’t mean that He has forgotten, or

perhaps become a little senile in His old age. Not at all. God is omniscient at all times. He never forgets anything. But He chooses to treat us as if we had never sinned (Hebrews 10:17; , if we are willing to come back to Him with the right attitude. In fact, it is much easier for God to forgive us than it is for us to forgive ourselves! But Israel was too busy with their own plans to remember God. Despite all that He had done for them, they were busy offering sacrifices to these other “gods” who had no real existence at all. When all is done and said, God’s name will be greatly magnified and honored because of the wonderful way in which He has dealt with His children. Finally, when all is open before the eyes of the universe, every one of us will bow down and agree that God did everything He could and in the best possible way and time to try to work with each one of us. Then we will realize fully the meaning of “for my own name’s sake!”

“Isaiah 43:25 “for My own sake”: The Lord chooses to save and forgive. This arises out of His own character. For similar phrases, see 37:35; 42:21; 48:9,11.” (*Nelson Study Bible*)

God’s forgiveness is a part of His love. By forgiving us He demonstrates once again what a magnificent God He is. But we do not honor Him by continuing to sin so He can continue to forgive us. When we do that we are just destroying the most precious thing in God’s universe—one of His children. So God’s forgiveness is to bring about a reformation in us. (Romans 2:4) If God can do anything at all to transform our lives then He and all heaven rejoices that another person has been saved. This leads to honor and glory for God’s name. (Matthew 5:16)

In Isaiah’s day Yahweh was being so badly misrepresented by His own people that God found it necessary to step in and do something for His own name’s sake. The whole world was supposed to be learning about Him and being attracted to Him because of what they had learned about Him. But because His chosen people were doing such an irresponsible job of mixing false religion in with the true, people from other nations were coming to think that Yahweh was really no different than one of their “gods!” (Isaiah 36:7,10,13-20; 37:8-13) They were even claiming that their “gods” had given them victory over Yahweh. In such a situation God needed to defend His name before the entire world and the entire universe. (Isaiah 37:36) See #14 above.

It is interesting to note that much of what is known as Deutero-Isaiah (40-55) is taken up with a very elaborate explanation of who God is. Why would that be necessary? Because the time had already come for God to allow judgment to fall on the northern kingdom of Israel and it wasn’t going to be a very long time before judgment would come on the southern kingdom Judah, God finds it necessary to “separate” Himself in some ways from the fate of His people. He had to do what He could to prevent people from thinking that since His “children” were going into captivity it must mean that their God has lost His power! So God has to point out what kind of a God He is. He must do some thing, (like wiping out the Assyrian army around Jerusalem) to prove that He is no ordinary “god”. And God realized that some 700 years later He would arrive and have to face the descendants of these same people and turn their system upside down. Ultimately, it would destroy them as a nation. How sad, that God’s own chosen people should come to that!

17. What could possibly lead people to practice the folly of making a “god” out of something that you would normally use to warm your food? (Isaiah 44:9-20; compare 41:21-29; 46:5-7;

Psalms 115:1-8; Habakkuk 2:18-19) Contrast this with the true God, what He wants, and what He does. (Isaiah 1:10-31; Isaiah 40)

Isaiah 44:9-20:⁹ All those who make idols are worthless, and the gods they prize so highly are useless. Those who worship these gods are blind and ignorant—and they will be disgraced.¹⁰ It's no good making a metal image to worship as a god!¹¹ Everyone who worships it will be humiliated. The people who make idols are human beings and nothing more. Let them come and stand trial—they will be terrified and will suffer disgrace.

¹² The metalworker takes a piece of metal and works with it over a fire. His strong arm swings a hammer to pound the metal into shape. As he works, he gets hungry, thirsty, and tired.

¹³ The carpenter measures the wood. He outlines a figure with chalk, carves it out with his tools, and makes it in the form of a man, a handsome human figure, to be placed in his house.¹⁴ He might cut down cedars to use, or choose oak or cypress wood from the forest. Or he might plant a laurel-tree and wait for the rain to make it grow.¹⁵ A person uses part of a tree for fuel and part of it for making an idol. With one part he builds a fire to warm himself and bake bread; with the other part he makes a god and worships it.¹⁶ With some of the wood he makes a fire; he roasts meat, eats it, and is satisfied. He warms himself and says, "How nice and warm! What a beautiful fire!"¹⁷ The rest of the wood he makes into an idol, and then he bows down and worships it. He prays to it and says, "You are my god—save me!"

¹⁸ Such people are too stupid to know what they are doing. They close their eyes and their minds to the truth.¹⁹ The maker of idols hasn't the wit or the sense to say, "Some of the wood I burnt up. I baked some bread on the embers and I roasted meat and ate it. And the rest of the wood I made into an idol. Here I am bowing down to a block of wood!"

²⁰ It makes as much sense as eating ashes. His foolish ideas have so misled him that he is beyond help. He won't admit to himself that the idol he holds in his hand is not a god at all."
Good News Bible: Today's English Version

Isaiah 46:5-7:⁵ "With whom will you compare me?" says the Lord.

"Is there anyone else like me?

⁶ People open their purses and pour out gold;
they weigh out silver on the scales.

They hire a goldsmith to make a god;
then they bow down and worship it!

⁷ They lift it to their shoulders and carry it;
they put it in place, and there it stands,
unable to move from where it is.

If anyone prays to it, it cannot answer

or save him from disaster. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

Psalms 115:1-8: ¹ To you alone, O Lord, to you alone,
and not to us, must glory be given
because of your constant love and faithfulness.

² Why should the nations ask us,
"Where is your God?"

³ Our God is in heaven;
he does whatever he wishes.
⁴ Their gods are made of silver and gold,
formed by human hands.
⁵ They have mouths, but cannot speak,
and eyes, but cannot see.
⁶ They have ears, but cannot hear,
and noses, but cannot smell.
⁷ They have hands, but cannot feel,
and feet, but cannot walk;
they cannot make a sound.
⁸ May all who made them and who trust in them
become like the idols they have made. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

Habakkuk 2:18,19: ¹⁸ What's the use of an idol? It is only something that a human being has made, and it tells you nothing but lies. What good does it do for its maker to trust it—a god that can't even talk!¹⁹ You are doomed! You say to a piece of wood, "Wake up!" or to a block of stone, "Get up!" Can an idol reveal anything to you? It may be covered with silver and gold, but there is no life in it. ²⁰ The LORD is in his holy Temple; let everyone on earth be silent in his presence." *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

This is primarily a thought question. It is clear that "idols" make few demands on their worshipers! But then again, how many things that are very "important" to us are nothing more than "idols"? How much of our time is spent on pursuits that have no more ultimate value than the "idols" in Isaiah's day. No doubt having a great "idol" in one's home gave social standing! It demonstrated to others that you were "somebody". It gave one a sense of some kind of security. It was thought to afford some kind of protection—some would call it "fire insurance". But if you should become suddenly ill or even die, of what value would it be then? What percentage of our time do we spend striving and working hard for things that have no eternal value. By contrast, how much time do we spend preparing for eternity?

But humans have always seemed to want to control some powerful force that would give them the ability to do what they want to do. We see this still in the "health and wealth" ministries on TV today. And what could be more attractive than a form of worship that appeals to the passions of the human heart? How were the temple and its services supposed to compete with temple prostitutes, wine, and the promiscuous lifestyle that was promoted at the fertility cult sites? If you even had the slightest notion that these fertility cult "gods" had any power at all, their program was almost irresistible. This was pretty well demonstrated by the fact that the captives who returned from Babylonian exile went almost immediately back into the same problems that had led to their ancestors being taken off into captivity! It seems that the only defense against the onslaught of these perverse religions was to recognize that their "gods" had no reality to them at all.

When the worshipers in these fertility cult religions were drunk and busy about their promiscuous practices it didn't matter too much that the whole thing seemed so ridiculous when considered from a purely rational perspective. The Devil has never encouraged his followers to think carefully about what he is asking them to do! Many, if not most, of these

worshippers probably never stopped to think about the foolishness of what they were doing.

18. See Isaiah 48:9,11. Does this seem selfish? Would we have any future if God were not the gracious, trustworthy Person we believe Him to be? In what sense does God do things “for My own name’s sake” (compare Isaiah 37:35; 42:21; 43:25)?

Isaiah 48:9-11: ⁹ “In order that people will praise my name,

I am holding my anger in check;

I am keeping it back and will not destroy you.

¹⁰ I have tested you in the fire of suffering,
as silver is refined in a furnace.

But I have found that you are worthless.

¹¹ **What I do is done for my own sake—**

**I will not let my name be dishonoured
or let anyone else share the glory**

that should be mine and mine alone.” *Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

2 Kings 19:34; 20:6; Isaiah 37:35: “I will defend this city and protect it, for the sake of my own honour and because of the promise I made to my servant David.” (*GNB*)

Isaiah 42:21: The Lord is a God who is eager to save,

so he exalted his laws and teachings,

and he wanted his people to honour them. (*GNB*)

Daniel 9:19: “¹⁹ Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, hearken and do! defer not, for thine own sake, O my God! for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.” *Darby*

“¹⁹ Lord, hear us. Lord, forgive us. Lord, listen to us, and act! In order that everyone will know that you are God, do not delay! This city and these people are yours.” (*GNB*)

See #16 above. If God should lose in the great controversy, we would all lose. If God in any way appears less than the wonderful Person He is, then in a certain sense we all, as His children, lose. God’s plans for us are so much better and higher than any we might make for ourselves that when we come to know Him we realize that our greatest joy and hope is in promoting His cause. Ultimately that is what is best for us as well.

“God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Phil. 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.” *The Desire of Ages* 224,225 (1898); *CC* 278; *MH* 479; *FLB* 64; *IHP* 267; *PK* 578; *TDG* 122 (Letter 69, April 23, 1903, to a young man suffering affliction); *RH* March 7, 1912

Suffering would not be our first choice of things to do! But when it is all over, if we believe inspiration, suffering might be what is best for us. So, for those who trust God, it should always be our first choice to do what best represents Him—because in the perspective of eternity, that

is what is best for us as well.

19. Is it still true that as we consider the sufferings and death of Christ “we thought his punishment was sent from God” (Isaiah 53:4)? Did God “lay on him the iniquity of us all” (vs. 6)?

Look at the comments from a few well known sources:

Isaiah 53:4-6: “Griefs” is literally “sicknesses.” “Borne” (*nasa*<, Heb.) is used in connection with the sacrifices of expiation (cf. Lev. 5:1, 17; 16:22)...The word “wounded” (*meholal*, Heb.) literally means “pierced.” The vicarious and substitutionary nature of His suffering and death, in which Jesus laid down His own life in behalf of every man who would accept His redemption, is set forth (cf. 1 Pet. 2:24, 25)...“All” is a reference not only to the entire nation of Israel, which wandered in the wilderness in sin, but also to the whole race of mankind, who wandered from God’s perfect way (cf. 66:3; Prov. 12:15; 14:12). God the Father “laid” the burden of redemption upon the Son, who willingly and voluntarily accepted the burden. His redemption was as universal as man’s sin.” (*Believer’s Study Bible*)

Bible references that are used to sustain this viewpoint are as follows:

Romans 4:25: Because of our sins he was handed over to die, and he was raised to life in order to put us right with God. (*GNB*)

1 Peter 2:24: Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by his wounds that you have been healed. (*GNB*)

2 Corinthians 5:21: Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God. (*GNB*)

“**Isaiah 53:3–5.** To provide a detailed description of His suffering, the prophet uses a series of verbs with an assumed subject (the Servant). **Despised** (from *bazah*, “to disdain or scorn”) and **rejected** [*chadal*, “abandoned”] **of men**. He is further described as a **man of sorrows** (*mak<obot*, severe pains) and **acquainted with grief** (*cholé*, “injuries”). Because of His severe personal suffering **we hid as it were our faces from him**. The description of Christ’s suffering in the New Testament Gospels clearly indicates the severity of His physical suffering: the agony in the garden, His battered face, the severe scourging, and the torture of the crucifixion itself. His substitutionary atonement is clearly taught. **He hath borne our griefs** (lit., “spiritual sickness”). The New Testament says that He Himself “bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24). Thus He was **stricken, smitten, and afflicted. We** (mankind in general) thought He was judged **of God**. But **he was wounded** [or “pierced through”] **for our transgressions** (sins). The verb **bruised** translates *daka*<, meaning “to be utterly crushed.” **Our iniquities** (>*awon*) means moral “evils.” **Chastisement** [*musar*, “correction” or “discipline”] **of our peace** refers to that which procured our peace with God. **With his stripes** (or “wounds”) **we are healed** (*rapa*<, to mend or cure) refers to our spiritual condition being made whole. In Isaiah the term is always used of spiritual healing and forgiveness. See 19:22 and 57:18.

“**Isaiah 53:6-7. All we** (lit., “all of us”) are compared to **sheep ... gone astray** to illustrate the desperate condition of mankind, lost, without a Shepherd (Matt. 9:36). **All** and **every** are

used in parallel, emphasizing the totality of sinful humanity. **Laid on him** is a causative verb meaning “to strike violently.” Thus Christ propitiates the violent wrath of God for us. The fact that He opened not His mouth is illustrated by a **lamb** being brought to **the slaughter**. See John 1:29 and Revelation 5:6,12.” (*King James Version Study Bible*)

We could go on and on. The standard understanding of what happened on the cross is that Christ voluntarily took on Himself “the wrath of God against sin”. Thus He “bore” our sins. Now that Christ has paid the price for our sins, God can accept us once again. This is the view that one is basically left with if one doesn’t understand or hasn’t heard anything about the great controversy.

In our great controversy understanding, Christ needed to take upon Himself the results of “sin” in order to demonstrate how serious sin is. This took place according to the plan that Father, Son and Holy Spirit had agreed to before this world was created. We don’t need to be afraid of God’s wrath! What we need to be afraid of is the results of sin. Now that Christ has demonstrated what those results are, for all to see, we have a choice. We can accept God’s plan for our lives and live for eternity with Him or we can continue in our sins and reap the guaranteed results.

20. Is it possible to keep Isaiah 58:13-14 legalistically? Would a parent dare to say to a child, “You have to eat your broccoli!” “Smile when you eat your broccoli!” “You must **enjoy** your broccoli!”--What is God saying about the Sabbath, here?

Romans 14:6: “What’s important in all this is that if you keep a holy day, keep it for *God’s* sake; if you eat meat, eat it to the glory of God and thank God for prime rib; if you’re a vegetarian, eat vegetables to the glory of God and thank God for broccoli. None of us are permitted to insist on our own way in these matters.” (*The Message*)

God is recognizing here that Sabbath observance is supposed to be a joyous occasion and a celebration. If it is regarded as something other than this, it is not serving its purpose! This is not a command to “enjoy” the Sabbath or anything else.

¹³If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath,
From pursuing your affairs on My holy day;
If you call the sabbath “delight,”
The LORD’s holy day “honored”;
And if you honor it and go not your ways
Nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains—

¹⁴Then you can seek the favor of the LORD.
I will set you astride the heights of the earth,
And let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob—
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (*Tanakh-The Holy Scriptures*)

God has given us the Sabbath as a chance to come to Him for fellowship and rest. It was never intended to be some kind of burden. The Sabbath is a blessing waiting to be taken and experienced. If we do that, then we will enjoy all the benefits that God intended for us. Notice that this blessing is based on the promise of God given in Deuteronomy 32:9,13.

<i>The Principle of the Sabbath</i>				
Name	Reference	Time	Purpose	Prophetic Significance
Sabbath (Heb. Shabbat)	Ex. 20:8–11; 31:12–17; Lev. 23:3; Deut. 5:12–15	The evening of the sixth day to the evening of the next day	1. To rest from work, to honor God, and to reflect on God's covenant with Israel. 2. To commemorate God's completion of creation (Gen. 2:2, 3).	Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28).
Sabbath Year	Ex. 23:10, 11; Lev. 25:1–7, 20–22; Deut. 15:1–18	Every seventh year	1. To allow the land to rest or lie fallow. 2. To forgive debts. 3. To release Hebrews bound to servitude because of debt.	God through Jesus Christ has given rest, forgiven us, and set us free (Matt. 11:28; John 8:36; Eph. 1:7).
Year of Jubilee, (lit. "Year of the Blowing Ram's Horn")	Lev. 25:8–55; 27:17–24; Ezek. 46:17	The fiftieth year following seven Sabbath years	1. To proclaim liberty to those who were slaves because of debt. 2. To return land to the former owners. 3. To rejoice and celebrate—with no crops to be planted.	This observance pictures the deliverance from the bondage and slavery of sin that comes in Christ (John 8:36; Gal. 5:1).

Women's Study Bible

21. Could Isaiah 66:23 be true if the Sabbath were intended as an arbitrary test of our obedience or an arbitrary requirement? What function could it possibly serve after the judgment is over and the righteous are in heaven? Will God actually continue to test our obedience forever?

This should be the end of the idea that the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of our obedience. True Sabbath observance has always been a time of sacred fellowship and renewal and rest. There never was a time when God regarded it as some kind of test. However, this has often been the approach taken by humans. But the arbitrary test idea fits better with the idea that God has got His eyes on us and is constantly watching to see if we are going to get out of line. He is just watching for some excuse to punish us or perhaps discipline us. By contrast, Isaiah is looking forward to a time when everything will be ideal as God planned it and we will be living in harmony in heaven. Under those circumstances Sabbath observance could never be an unpleasant requirement!

It is interesting to note that even the pope, John Paul II wrote a complete document on the proper keeping of the Sabbath. He seems to have all the Biblical ideas pretty well understood, except that instead of applying all those principles to the Sabbath as understood by Jews and

others who keep the seventh-day, he applies all of them to the keeping of the Sunday which he believes the church had the authority to institute in place of the seventh-day Sabbath. Protestants accept this explanation quite readily! Look at Matthew Henry's comments on this verse:

"1. How the sabbath is to be sanctified (Isaiah 58:13); and, there remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day." (*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*)

"The work of restoration is to begin with a revival of true Sabbath observance, the essence of which is communion with God and remembrance of His creative power, on the day that He made holy. The fate of Israel as a nation was determined by its attitude toward God's holy day (see Jer. 17:24–27). The Sabbath was never intended to be an end in itself, but rather a means by which man might become acquainted with the character and purposes of his Creator (see on Ex. 20:8)...The essence of sin is selfishness—doing what one pleases, irrespective of God or man. The Sabbath day presents man with an opportunity to subdue selfishness and cultivate the habit of doing things that are pleasing to God (1 John 3:22) and that contribute to the well-being of others. Rightly understood and observed, the Sabbath is the key to man's happiness both here and in the hereafter. True Sabbath observance will lead to the work of reformation pictured in Isa. 58:5–12. Those who do not enter into the spirit of the Sabbath as God ordained it, little realize what they are missing. The Sabbath is one of the greatest blessings bestowed upon men by a loving Creator." (*SDA Bible Commentary*)

22. Why does Isaiah end with Isaiah 66:24? Is this a statement about the state of the dead?

It is quite interesting to note what other commentators have said about this verse:

"**Isaiah 66:24** This verse describes the fate of the transgressors, those who rejected God's salvation. It is a picture of eternal torment (cf. Mark 9:42–49)." (*Believer's Study Bible*)

"**Isaiah 66:17–24**. The book ends with a fearful glimpse of final judgment. The prophet foresees a time when **those that escape** the Tribulation period will be sent **unto the nations** (Gentiles) to **declare** God's **glory** among them. During the millennial kingdom they will come to **Jerusalem** to worship Him. **All flesh** refers to the redeemed of the Lord from all nations who will **come to worship** Him. The book ends with the awesome statement that the redeemed will **go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me**. Their suffering is described as being in the place where **their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched** (cf. Mark 9:44; Rev. 20:14, 15). The scene described here is that of the redeemed of heaven in their final glorified state and of those who are lost forever in the lake of fire. Thus Isaiah closes his prophecy with a stern reminder that there is a real heaven to be gained and a real hell to be avoided." (*King James Version Study Bible*)

"**Isaiah 66:24: Corpses** refers to the rebels (5:25; 34:3). The word for **transgressed** is related to the word for *rebelled* in 1:2. **Their worm ... is not quenched** depicts eternal punishment (48:22; 57:20). The imagery derives from the Valley of Hinnom that was Jerusalem's garbage dump, where unclean corpses decomposed and were burned. This verse is cited by Jesus in Mark 9:44,46,48. Although the Book of Isaiah depicts God's coming salvation, it closes with a strong statement of the judgment of the wicked." (*Nelson Study Bible*)

Bible)

Isaiah 30:33: ³³Long ago a place was prepared where a huge fire will burn the emperor of Assyria. It is deep and wide, and piled high with wood. The LORD will breathe out a stream of flame to set it on fire.” (*GNB*)

“The worm that died on the dead bodies in Gehenna died, and the fire, which consumed them, was soon extinguished; but in the figurative Gehenna the means of punishment are everlasting. (Mt 25:41,46; Re 20:10)” (*The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*)

It is clear that these commentators believe that the “corpses” or “dead bodies” of Isaiah 66:24 are not really dead. If they were dead they could not suffer any torment. So is this a reference to “hell” or is this using the figure of the Gehenna outside the city gate as a lesson for those who choose to rebel against all that God has said? If God is some day going to torture forever those who do not cooperate with Him, then would it be safe for anyone to live with Him? Because of this doctrine of “hell” millions of people have been turned against God.

“It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of **eternal torment**. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that **our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated?** The **appalling views of God** which have spread over the world from the teachings of **the pulpit** have made thousands, yes, **millions**, of **skeptics and infidels**.

“The theory of **eternal torment** is one of the false doctrines that constitute the wine of the abomination of Babylon, of which she makes all nations drink. Revelation 14:8; 17:2.” *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 356,357 (1884); GC 536; FLB 176; compare GC 545

Are we willing to study to see what God has actually said in Scripture, or do we choose to believe what we want to believe, ignoring the plainest words?

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EGW Quotes:

“It was under circumstances of difficulty and discouragement that Isaiah, while yet a young man, was called to the prophetic mission. Disaster was threatening his country. By their transgression of God's law the people of Judah had forfeited His protection, and the Assyrian forces were about to come against the kingdom of Judah. But the danger from their enemies was not the greatest trouble. It was the perversity of the people that brought upon the Lord's servant the deepest depression. By their apostasy and rebellion they were inviting the judgments of God. The youthful prophet had been called to bear to them a message of warning, and he knew that he would meet with obstinate resistance. He trembled as he viewed himself and thought of the stubbornness and unbelief of the people for whom he was to labor. His task seemed to him almost hopeless. Should he in despair relinquish his mission and leave Israel undisturbed to their idolatry? Were the gods of Nineveh to rule the earth in defiance of the God of heaven?” 5T 749.2