



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ISAIAH 40-66

Week 2

DAY 8

Pagan Pawns

Isaiah 45

OPENING
up to the Word

Has God ever used someone you didn't assume to be a Christ-follower to rescue, bless or deliver you?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What seven promises did God make to Cyrus, the king of Persia (vs. 1-3)?
 2. Why did God give Cyrus special treatment (v. 4)?
 3. Though God would do much for Cyrus, would Cyrus know it came from God (vs. 4-5)?
 4. For what purpose did God lavish blessings on Cyrus (v. 13)?
 5. How many times in this chapter does God refer to the fact that he alone is God and there is none besides him? (a) 3, (b) 2, (c) 6, (d) 8.
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LIVING
out the Word

1. Can you think of people God places in your world to protect you (firefighters, police, etc.)?
 2. Have you ever been "rescued" from a dangerous situation? Did you previously know your rescuer?
 3. Do you feel that you have ever been used by God to help rescue someone else?
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WINDOW
on the Word

*In an amazing statement God calls the king of Persia, Cyrus, "his anointed" (v. 1). This word was used for the relationship between God and Israel's first two kings. Here it refers to the special position that Cyrus filled for God, not his position in God's kingdom, for he would not acknowledge God. "I will give you the treasures of darkness" (v. 3). Cyrus' victories over other countries would be easy and his plunder rich. Such was the case when Cyrus conquered Lydia and Babylon. A **potsherd** (v. 9) was a broken piece of pottery that was fit only to be thrown away.*

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ISAIAH THE PROPHET

Isaiah prophesied during a politically unstable and violent era. He witnessed the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel, the near-defeat of the kingdom of Judah by Assyria and the beginnings of the rise of Babylon as a major power.

KINGS OF JUDAH	KINGS OF ISRAEL	KINGS OF ASSYRIA	LIFE OF ISAIAH
<p>770 B.C. UZZIAH</p> <p>760 B.C.</p> <p>750 B.C. JOTHAM</p> <p>740 B.C.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AHAZ</p> <p>730 B.C.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HEZEKIAH</p> <p>720 B.C.</p> <p>710 B.C.</p> <p>700 B.C.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MANASSEH</p> <p>690 B.C.</p> <p>680 B.C.</p> <p>670 B.C.</p>	<p>JEROBOAM II</p> <p>ZACHARIAH SHALLUM MENAHEM</p> <p>PAKAHIAH PEKAH</p> <p>HOSHEA</p>	<p>ASSUR-DAN III</p> <p>ASSUR-NARARI</p> <p>TIGLATH-PILESER III</p> <p>SHALMANESER V SARGON II</p> <p>SENNACHERIB</p> <p>ESARHADDON</p>	<p>Isaiah was probably born during Uzziah's reign.</p> <p>Isaiah sees a vision from God and is called to be a prophet.</p> <p>Philistines invite Hezekiah to ally against Assyria. Isaiah counsels against it.</p> <p>Sennacherib besieges Jerusalem. Hezekiah prays for deliverance and Isaiah tells him that God has heard his prayer.</p> <p>According to tradition, Isaiah is executed during the reign of Manasseh.</p>

DAY 9

Lose the Heavy Baggage

Isaiah 46

OPENING
up to the Word

What kind of religious “baggage” do you feel some people carry? How could God make their burden light?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What were people carrying around that was a “burden for the weary” (v. 1)?
2. Who did Isaiah say conceived and gave birth to Israel (Jacob) (v. 3)? In contrast, who conceived and gave birth to idols?
3. While idols became heavy burdens that the people had to carry, how does God differ from idols (v. 4)?
4. How would God prove again that he alone is God and he alone can do what he pleases (vs. 10-11)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Do you remember a time in your life when you carried around “heavy baggage,” (wrong ways of thinking about yourself and God)?
2. Were these faulty ideas negatively affecting your life? How?
3. From this passage, does it seem as if God wants to increase your burdens or lighten them? How can he lighten them?

WINDOW
on the Word

Bel and Nebo were Babylonian gods. Bel (not to be confused with Baal, the Canaanite god) was another name for Marduk, god of the sun. Nebo, the god of learning, writing and astronomy, was the son of Marduk. Large, heavy images of these gods were carried around on special holidays. They would be unable to save the Babylonians from Cyrus. **“From the east I summon a bird of prey”** (v. 11). Cyrus’ emblem was a golden eagle.

Painting the Town Dead

DAY 10

Isaiah 47

Can you think of any examples within the last 100 years of countries or people who have made great and arrogant boasts that their good fortune would never end? What happened to them?

1. How did God say life would change for the Babylonian people accustomed to luxury (vs. 2-3)?
2. What arrogant claim did Babylon make (v. 7)?
3. How long would it take for all of Babylon's luxury and splendor to fall (v. 9)?
4. What were the Babylonians trusting in to save them and give them guidance (vs. 12-15)?

1. We experience consequences for our actions. What are the ultimate consequences of seeking guidance and insight through mysticism and astrology?

2. Have you ever known people who suddenly lost their wealth? How did they react?

3. If you, through no fault of your own, were suddenly to lose all your worldly goods and lifestyle, how would you react? (a) with anger, (b) with indignation, (c) with disillusionment, (d) with resignation.

Virgin Daughter (v. 1) was a personification of the city of Babylon as a young innocent maiden. Virgin most likely referred to the fact that her walls had never been breached, thus encouraging her arrogant pride. Isaiah described Babylon's fall to the Persians (539 B.C.) long before it occurred. **"Keep on then, with your magic spells"** (v. 12). God mocks the Babylonians' reliance on magic, astrology and sorcery. Continue to use them, he says, and see if they can spare you. Astrology was common in Babylon (Da 2:2, 4-5).

OPENING

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DIGGING

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Rebel Without a Cause

Isaiah 48

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever known of someone who seemed to want to rebel against everything and everyone?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What kind of figurative language did God use to describe Israel's stubbornness (v. 4)?
2. What was one of God's purposes in telling his people events that would happen in the future? How did that highlight the weakness of their idols (v. 5)?
3. If Israel had listened to God and obeyed him, what would he have done for them (v. 17-19)?

LIVING
out the Word

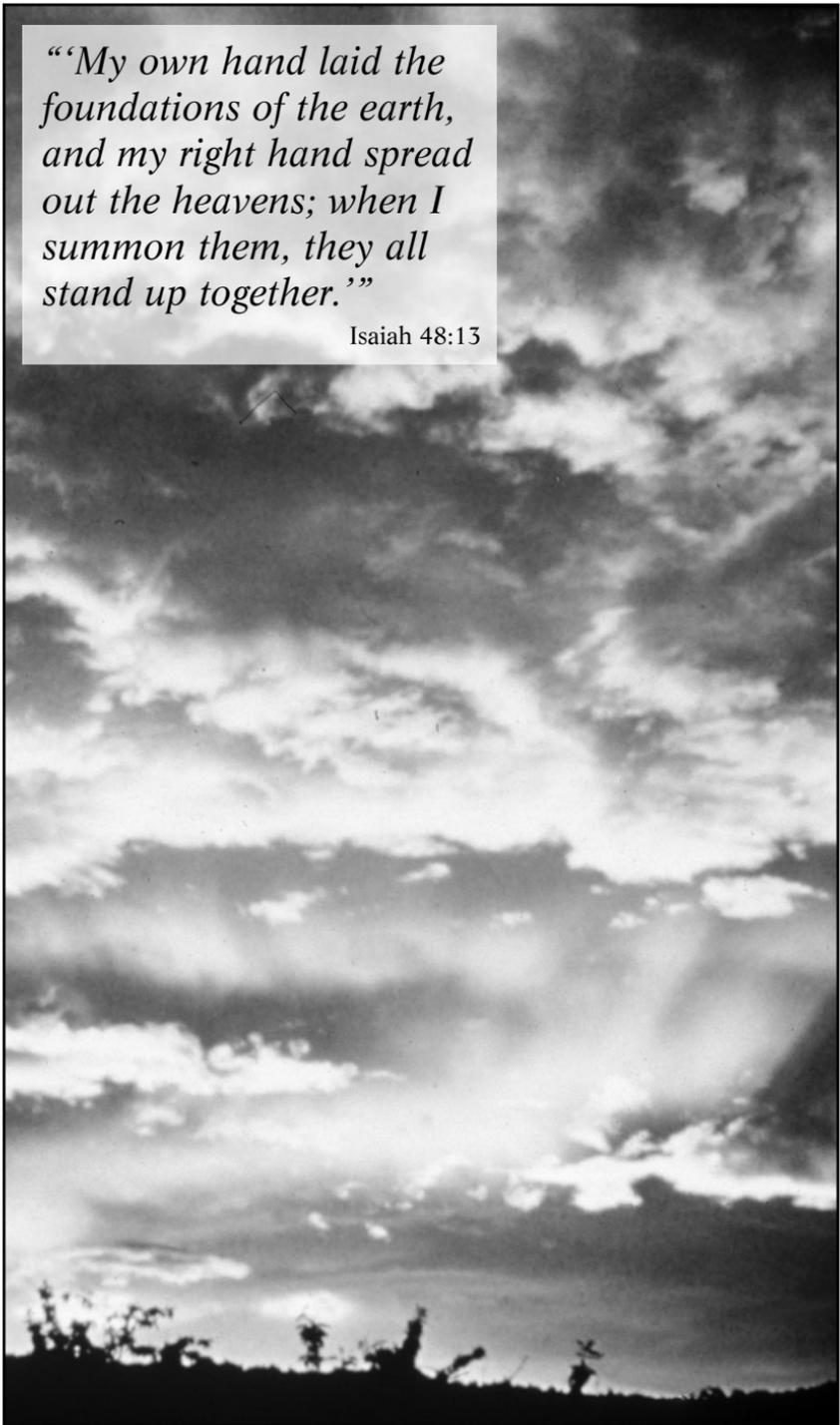
1. What things do you think are good to rebel against and what things should not be rebelled against?
2. Does your country and culture encourage or discourage rebels? Think of some examples.

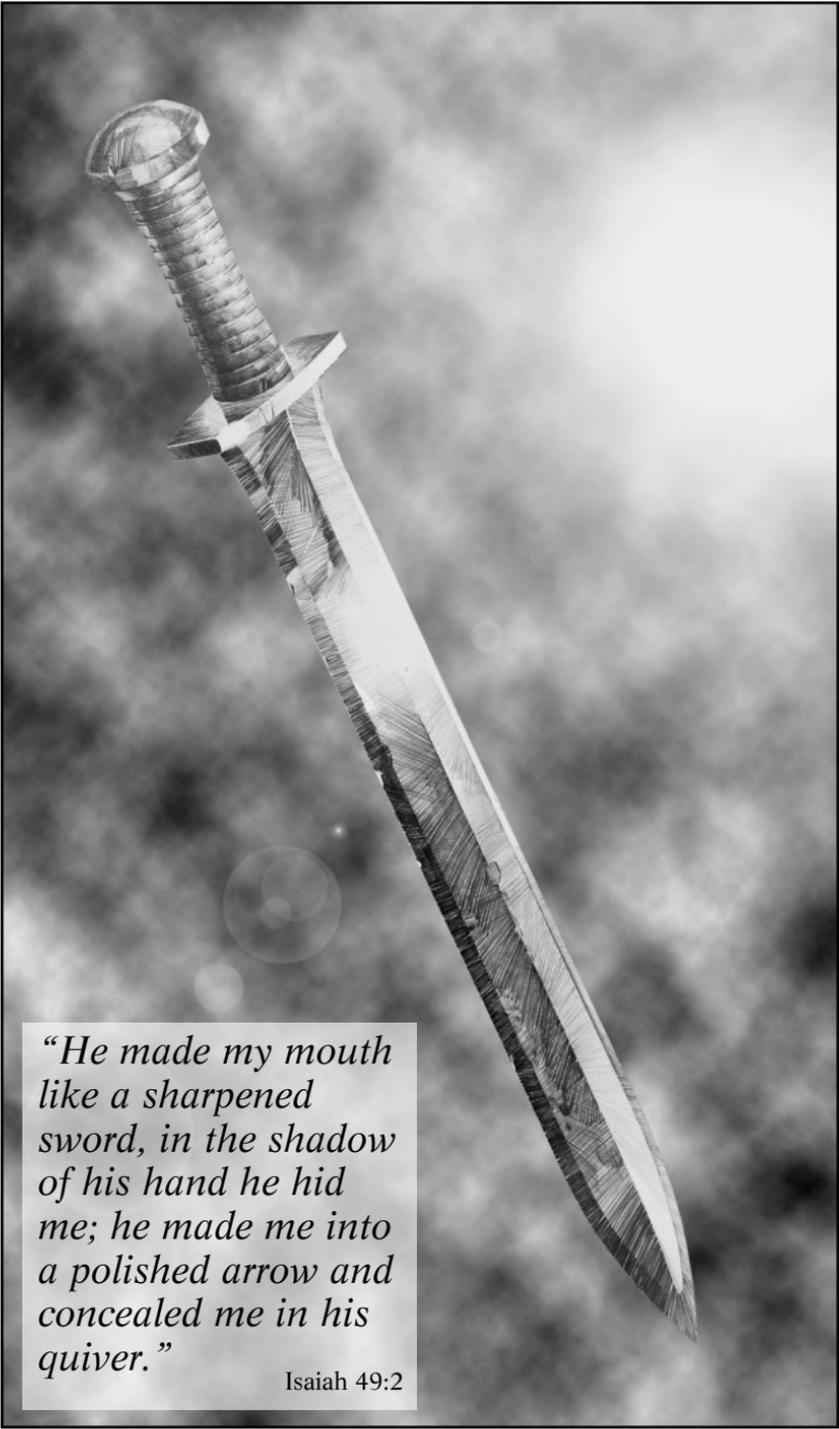
WINDOW
on the Word

"For my own name's sake" (v. 9). The purpose of Israel's exile was to purify and refine their faith, to bring them back to their God and away from their idols.

“My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.”

Isaiah 48:13





*“He made my mouth
like a sharpened
sword, in the shadow
of his hand he hid
me; he made me into
a polished arrow and
concealed me in his
quiver.”*

Isaiah 49:2

The Servant's Reward

DAY 12

Isaiah 49

Have you ever been rewarded for doing a difficult and seemingly thankless job? Did the reward make up, in some way, for all your effort?

1. Who is speaking in this passage (v. 1)?
2. What is the appointed task for this servant (v. 6)?
3. To what time in Israel's history do verses 8-13 seem to refer? Note that Paul quotes verse 8 in 2 Corinthians 6:2, seeing this prophecy as being fulfilled with the new covenant in Christ.
4. What is Jerusalem's (Zion's) complaint to God because of all her difficulties (v. 14)?
5. How does God answer Jerusalem's complaint in vs. 15-26?

1. When you work hard at something that will benefit someone else, and they never seem to thank you, how do you feel? (a) content, (b) disappointed, (c) slighted, (d) angry.
2. What are three of the most thankless jobs you've ever done?
3. What was the greatest reward you ever received for a difficult and trying task?

***"You are my servant, Israel"** (v. 3) refers to our Lord Jesus. In this context, the name Israel cannot refer to the literal nation of Israel, since this servant's job is to draw the nation back to God. The Messiah is called Israel here because as the seed of David he alone fulfills the promise given to Israel. **"I will beckon to the gentiles"** (v. 22). This prophecy looks ahead to the time of the new covenant, when gentiles are equally included in God's kingdom.*

OPENING

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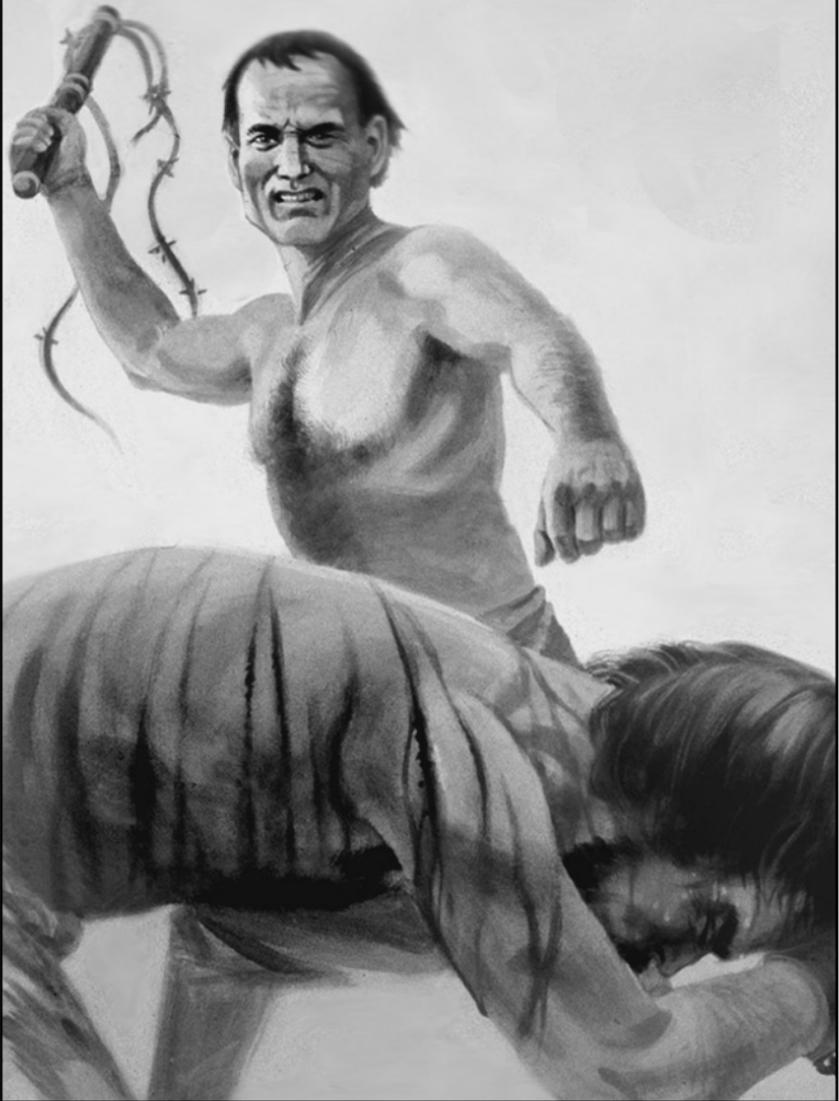
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

*“I offered my back to those who beat me,
my cheeks to those who pulled out my
beard; I did not hide my face from mocking
and spitting.”*

Isaiah 50:6



Artwork by Ken Tunell

Suffering Without Retaliation

DAY 13

Isaiah 50

Have you ever allowed someone to treat you badly, without retaliation? If so, why didn't you retaliate? Have you ever treated someone else badly without them retaliating against you?

1. To whom does verse 6 seem to be referring? What could this be prophesying?

2. What was the servant going to set his face like flint to do? To what event in the life of our Lord could this refer (v. 7)?

3. What does the Lord say will happen to those who accuse and condemn him (v. 9)?

1. What is the worst pain and heartache you have ever suffered?

2. Did you see this treatment as: (a) discipline from the Lord, (b) consequences of your own actions, (c) hurt and pain inflicted on you by others, (d) time and chance, (e) unfair and unmerited?

"Mother's certificate of divorce" (v. 1). The Lord is sending Israel away for rejecting him without any cause. "Has given me" (v. 4). At this point the servant of the Lord (the Messiah) begins to speak again. He explains that he will comfort the weary and allow himself to be treated cruelly and unfairly.

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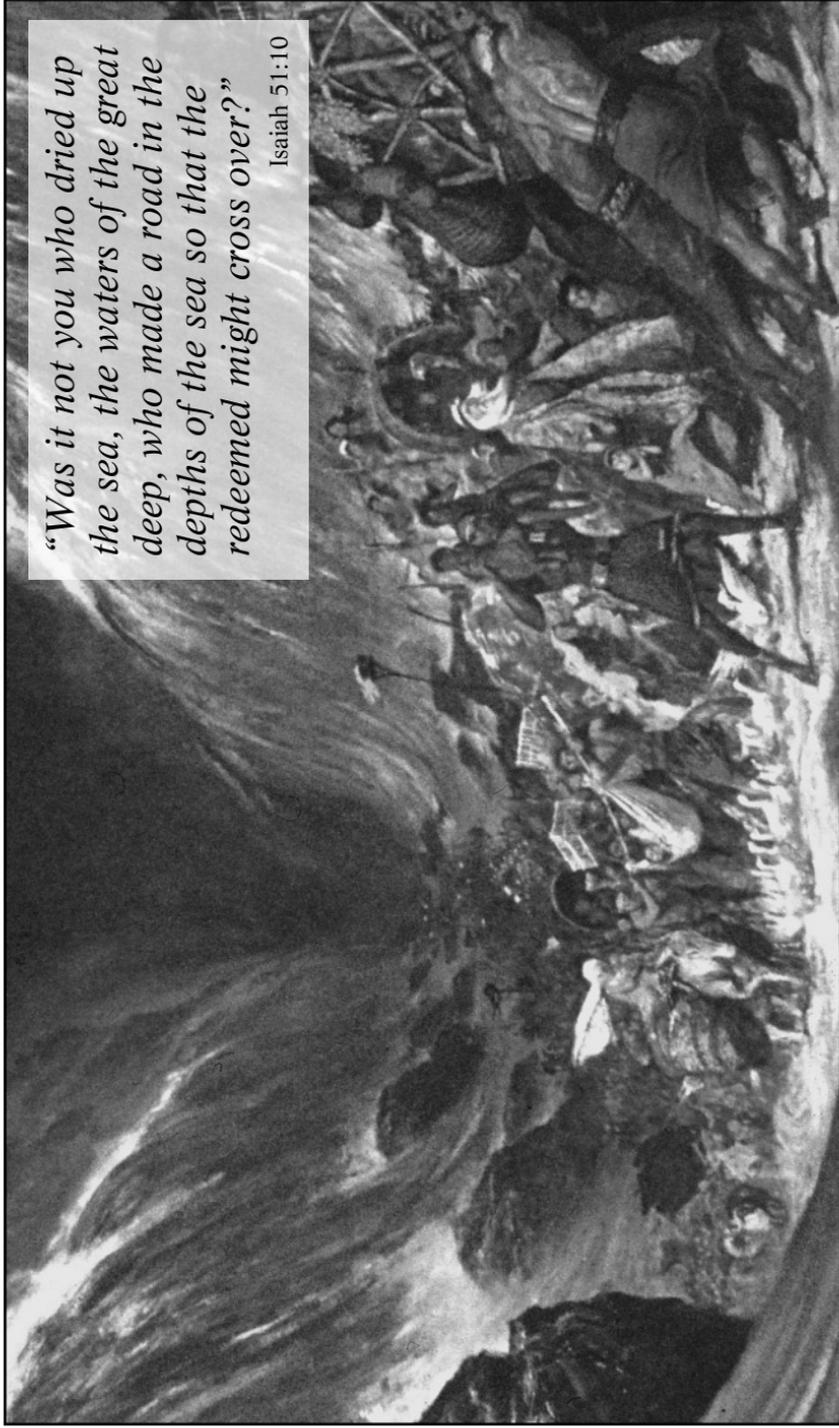
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

*“Was it not you who dried up
the sea, the waters of the great
deep, who made a road in the
depths of the sea so that the
redeemed might cross over?”*

Isaiah 51:10



Chips Off the Old Block

DAY 14

Isaiah 51

In what way do you resemble your parents? Are you most like them: (a) in appearance, (b) in personality, (c) in attitude, (d) in interests?

1. From what rock were the Hebrews cut (v. 1)?
2. In the future God planned to make Israel's desert wastelands (v. 3): (a) into a new town, (b) into an Eden-like garden, (c) into a capital city, (d) into a strip mall. Was this a physical or spiritual promise—or both?
3. What does God want them to stop fearing (vs. 7-8) and why?
4. God promises that he will remove from Israel a cup. What does that cup represent (vs. 22-23)?

1. When people speak about your resemblance to your parents, what resemblance are you most pleased with?
2. In what way do you think your parents would most want you to be like them? Are you? Why, or why not?

***“Make drunk, but not with wine”** (v. 21). In captivity the Hebrews would drink of the cup of the consequences of their own actions until they were drunk. They had, in a sense, emptied the cup of the punishment they brought on themselves.*

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