

# God Offers Deliverance

Isaiah 51:1-8

SS Lesson for 06/26/2022

**Devotional Scripture:** Ps 18:46-50

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: Isaiah 51:1*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### DELIVERANCE THROUGH SEEKING GOD (ISA 51:1-3)

##### *Seeking God by following Him (1)*

Followers of God will have the light of life (John 8:12)

Followers of God will inherit eternal life (Matt 19:29)

Followers of God will be blessed (Luke 6:22)

Followers of God will have the Spirit of God rest upon them (1 Peter 4:14)

Followers of God have indescribable glory awaiting them (1 Cor 2:9)

##### *Seeking God through parents (2)*

Parents should train their children about obedience to God (Col 3:20)

Parents should train their children about God's Word (Eph 6:4)

Parent training about God should be continual (Deut 6:6-9)

Parents should train their children about God's righteousness (Eph 6:1-2)

Parent honored by children prompts God to provide longer life (Deut 5:16)

##### *Seeking God's comfort (3)*

God's comfort prompts us to comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-4)

God's comfort allows us to share in others suffering (2 Cor 1:7)

God's comfort awaits us in Heaven (2 Cor 4:17)

God's comfort in our weakness demonstrates His power (2 Cor 12:10)

#### DELIVERANCE THROUGH GOD'S SALVATION (ISA 51:4-6)

##### *Salvation through God's justice (4)*

God's justice is demonstrated in His forbearance of our sin (Rom 3:25-26)

God's justice is right (2 Thess 1:5-6)

God's justice is manifested to both the righteous and the wicked (Eccl 3:17)

God's justice will be done for His chosen ones (Luke 18:7)

##### *Salvation through trusting God (5)*

Trusting God leads us in the way of righteousness (Ps 139:23-24)

Trusting God by seeking His kingdom first (Luke 12:29-31)

Trusting God because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)

Trusting God by being patient and standing firm in the faith (James 5:7-8)

Trusting God to provide overflowing hope (Rom 15:13)

##### *Salvation that leads to eternal life (6)*

Eternal life that calls for persistence in doing good (Rom 2:7)

Eternal life that is the result of being set free from sin (Rom 6:22)

Eternal life that is the result of pleasing the Holy Spirit (Gal 6:8)

Eternal life to which we were called (1 Tim 6:12)

#### DELIVERANCE THROUGH GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (ISA 51:7-8)

##### *Righteousness of God's Word (7)*

God's Word is righteous because God said it (Rev 21:5)

God's Word is righteous because God cannot lie (Heb 6:18)

God's Word is righteous because God's testimony is the greatest (1 John 5:9)

God's Word is righteous because it is holy (Rom 7:12)

God's Word is righteous because it is good (1 Tim 1:8)

God's Word is righteous because it gives freedom and blessings (James 1:25)

##### *Righteousness that is eternal (8)*

Righteousness is eternal because it can never be disgraced (Isa 45:17)

Righteousness is eternal because it endures forever (Ps 112:3)

Righteousness is eternal because it is true (Ps 119:142)

Righteousness is eternal because it cannot be shaken (Ps 125:1)  
Righteousness is eternal because God's ways are eternal (Hab 3:6)

## CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM THOMAS CONSTABLE  
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY  
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The opening lines of Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* are easily recognized by many readers: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." The same words could be used to describe Judah during Isaiah's ministry. The best of times were reflected in Judah's economic and military prowess (Isaiah 2:7); the worst of times were marked by the sin of idolatry and consequent exile in Babylon (39:6-7). In many ways, Judah's punishment was an indictment of their false gods and of the sins those "gods" condoned. The people had turned from the true God in spite of the great acts of deliverance they had experienced as a nation, and the admonitions in the Ten Commandments to have no other gods or graven images (Exodus 20:3-6). And the exile did have a purifying effect. Following the Babylonian captivity, Jewish idolatry was never a serious problem again (though of course other issues arose). The Jews who returned stood firm on their faithful foundation (see Isaiah 51:1-2), no matter what foreign invaders tried to tempt them with new gods. Though they had suffered through the worst of times, even better than their previous best times were still ahead. We can also assert that Babylon was punished for following their false gods. Had their worship been rendered to God and concerned with justice and righteousness instead of acquisition and power, the story of the Babylonian Empire would have been very different. In Isaiah 46-47 God mocked the Babylonians' idolatry and its associated practices. The idols have to be carried, but God's judgment would have them carried away (Isaiah 46:1). Though the people bowed to gods that they made, the God of the heavens had declared their end (46:10). Their "best of times" was about to come to a permanent close.

### Key Verse: Isaiah 51:1

*Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

**51:1-3.** Here **the LORD** is speaking to those **who pursue righteousness** (cf. Matt. 5:6) and **seek Him**. The believing remnant in Israel is to think back on their background. **The rock from which they were cut**, figuratively speaking, is explained in verse 2 as **Abraham** and **Sarah**, the "founders" of the nation. God **made him many**, that is, gave the patriarch many descendants as He had promised (Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:6; 22:17). For many years Abraham and Sarah had no children, but they believed God (Gen. 15:6). These people too are to believe Him. Though they have not yet seen the fruition of God's promises about Israel being a nation in the land (Gen. 15:18-21) they do have His sure word that God's kingdom will be established on the earth. Because of the Lord's **compassion** (cf. Isa. 49:10, 15) the land will someday be fruitful **like Eden... the garden of the LORD**. Because of this, **joy** (cf. 51:11) will abound among the remnant.

**51:4-8.** God's **Law** will be known (cf. 2:3) and **justice** and **righteousness** (see 1:21) will be established for **the nations** and **the islands** (see 41:1) by His **arm** (i.e., His power; cf. 51:9 and see 40:10). **The heavens** and **the earth** will pass away (**vanish like smoke** and **wear out like a garment**; cf. Heb. 1:11), **but** the Lord's work (**salvation**) and standards (**righteousness**) **will continue forever** (Isa. 51:8). Therefore, knowing this fact, the remnant with God's **Law** (v. 4) within them and eternal hope before them, should take courage and not be disheartened by their enemies' **insults** (cf. vv. 12-13; also note the **Suffering** Servant's response in 50:6). Those enemies will perish **like a moth-eaten garment**, a metaphor the Servant used earlier (50:9).

**51:9-11.** These verses could be taken as a prayer of the righteous remnant (though some scholars say they record the prophet's words as he reflected on what would happen to that remnant). The plea is that God in His power (**arm**; cf. v. 5) would rise again (**Awake**; cf. v. 17) and save His people as He did in the Exodus

(as in the days gone by). The question **Was it not you?** (vv. 9-10) was a way of affirming that the **LORD** did these things for their forefathers. (On **Rahab**, a mythical sea **monster** representing Egypt, see 30:7.) When Israel escaped from Egypt the Egyptian army was drowned in **the sea**. The Israelites crossed over the Red (Reed) Sea on dry ground (Ex. 14:21-31). In the same way **the LORD** by His strength will allow Israel to **return** in a new "Exodus" to her homeland (**Zion**) with **joy** (cf. Isa. 51:3).

**51:12-16.** The Lord now spoke to the remnant that was living in **fear** of destruction. He gave comfort reminding them that the ones they feared were only **men** (like **grass**; cf. 40:6-8) and that God is the all-powerful Creator (cf. 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18; 48:13; 51:16). The imprisoned remnant would soon be freed to return to the Promised Land in another "Exodus" (v. 14) because **the LORD**, the Creator **God** (vv. 15-16) is **their** God. He is intimate with them and protects them with His **hand** because they belong to Him in a unique relationship as His people (cf. Hosea 2:1, 23).

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Deliverance through Seeking God (Isa 51:1-3)**

1 "Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.

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

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

### **Seeking God by following Him (1)**

*Followers of God will have the light of life (John 8:12)*

12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

*Followers of God will inherit eternal life (Matt 19:29)*

29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

*Followers of God will be blessed (Luke 6:22)*

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

*Followers of God will have the Spirit of God rest upon them (1 Peter 4:14)*

14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

*Followers of God have indescribable glory awaiting them (1 Cor 2:9)*

9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—

### **Seeking God through parents (2)**

*Parents should train their children about obedience to God (Col 3:20)*

20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

*Parents should train their children about God's Word (Eph 6:4)*

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

*Parent training about God should be continual (Deut 6:6-9)*

6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

*Parents should train their children about God's righteousness (Eph 6:1-2)*

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise

*Parent honored by children prompts God to provide longer life (Deut 5:16)*

16 "Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

### **Seeking God's comfort (3)**

*God's comfort prompts us to comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-4)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

*God's comfort allows us to share in others suffering (2 Cor 1:7)*

7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

*God's comfort awaits us in Heaven (2 Cor 4:17)*

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

*God's comfort in our weakness demonstrates His power (2 Cor 12:10)*

10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

### **Deliverance through God's Salvation (Isa 51:4-6)**

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

5 My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples; The coastlands will wait upon Me, and on My arm they will trust.

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

### **Salvation through God's justice (4)**

*God's justice is demonstrated in His forbearance of our sin (Rom 3:25-26)*

25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

*God's justice is right (2 Thess 1:5-6)*

5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you

*God's justice is manifested to both the righteous and the wicked (Eccl 3:17)*

17 I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed."

*God's justice will be done for His chosen ones (Luke 18:7)*

7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

## **Salvation through trusting God (5)**

*Trusting God leads us in the way of righteousness (Ps 139:23-24)*

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

*Trusting God by seeking His kingdom first (Luke 12:29-31)*

29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

*Trusting God because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)*

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

*Trusting God by being patient and standing firm in the faith (James 5:7-8)*

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

*Trusting God to provide overflowing hope (Rom 15:13)*

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## **Salvation that leads to eternal life (6)**

*Eternal life that calls for persistence in doing good (Rom 2:7)*

7 To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.

*Eternal life that is the result of being set free from sin (Rom 6:22)*

22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

*Eternal life that is the result of pleasing the Holy Spirit (Gal 6:8)*

8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

*Eternal life to which we were called (1 Tim 6:12)*

12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

## ***Deliverance through God's Righteousness (Isa 51:7-8)***

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

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

### **Righteousness of God's Word (7)**

*God's Word is righteous because God said it (Rev 21:5)*

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

*God's Word is righteous because God cannot lie (Heb 6:18)*

18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

*God's Word is righteous because God's testimony is the greatest (1 John 5:9)*

9 We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.

*God's Word is righteous because it is holy (Rom 7:12)*

12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

*God's Word is righteous because it is good (1 Tim 1:8)*

8 We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.

*God's Word is righteous because it gives freedom and blessings (James 1:25)*

25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

### **Righteousness that is eternal (8)**

*Righteousness is eternal because it can never be disgraced (Isa 45:17)*

17 But Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.

*Righteousness is eternal because it endures forever (Ps 112:3)*

3 Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.

*Righteousness is eternal because it is true (Ps 119:142)*

142 Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true.

*Righteousness is eternal because it cannot be shaken (Ps 125:1)*

125 Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever.

*Righteousness is eternal because God's ways are eternal (Hab 3:6)*

6 He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed. His ways are eternal.

# Conclusion and Other Thoughts

## **Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable**

### **Verse 1**

The Lord appealed to the righteous in Israel to listen to Him (cf. Isaiah 50:10). Watts believed the speaker, through Isaiah 51:4, was Darius. [Note: Watts, Isaiah 34-66, p. 204.] These were the Israelites who sincerely wanted to trust and obey God, but found it difficult to do so because impending captivity seemed to contradict God's promises. The Lord directed them to consider their history, their origin. "Abraham was the rock from which his descendants were hewn-having a rocklike quality imparted to him by God's faithfulness and grace." [Note: Archer, p. 645.]

This section of Isaiah, like the preceding one, reflects on the third Servant Song (Isaiah 50:4-9). Here the emphasis is on the expectations of those who will listen to the Servant, as well as encouragement for those who are followers of righteousness. From this point through Isaiah 52:12, the Servant theme builds to its climax in Isaiah 52:13 to Isaiah 53:12. God directed His people three times, in Isaiah 51:1-8, to listen. They should listen and look back, to remember what He had done (Isaiah 51:1-3). They should listen and look up, to remember who God is (Isaiah 51:4-6). And they should listen and not fear, to remember what God had promised (Isaiah 51:7-8). [Note: Adapted from Dyer, in *The Old . . .*, p. 573.]

### **Verse 2**

Consider Abraham and Sarah, God counseled. From old Abraham and his barren wife, God had made a whole nation of people.

### **Verse 3**

Even though the Babylonians would reduce the population of Jerusalem almost to zero, the God who gave Abraham numerous descendants could and would repopulate Zion (cf. Isaiah 49:20). He would comfort His people, personified as Zion, by doing this. He would reverse Zion's fortunes, transforming her desert wilderness areas into another Eden. "*Like Eden* is not simply a figure of beauty and plenty but also one of the absence of the divine curse consequent upon sin." [Note: Motyer, p. 404.]

God would turn her sorrow and wailing into joyful singing and thanksgiving. The implication is that as Abraham was strong in faith and believed God's promises, so should the Israelites of Isaiah's day (cf. Genesis 15:6). "As Sarah gave birth to Isaac after a long period of barrenness, so Zion, a second Sarah, will be surrounded by a joyous multitude of children after a long period of desolation." [Note: Delitzsch, 2:283.]

### **Verse 4**

Again the Lord urged His nation to listen attentively to Him (cf. Isaiah 51:1). What God would do for His people, in preserving them and returning them to the land, would be a lesson (Heb. *torah*, instruction, "law") to the whole world. His justice in fulfilling His promises to the Israelites would lead many of the Gentiles out of their darkness and into His light. This is what Isaiah revealed earlier that Messiah the Servant would do (Isaiah 9:7; Isaiah 11:4; Isaiah 16:4-5; Isaiah 42:1-4; Isaiah 49:6).

### **Verse 5**

The righteousness, salvation, and strong judgment that the Lord promised to bring would be greater than just Israel's emancipation from Babylon, however, because the nations would anticipate it. Cyrus brought deliverance to the Israelites from Babylon, but the Servant would bring salvation to the nations of the world. The furthest reaches of humanity wait expectantly for God's delivering power, in the sense that everyone wants someone to correct the mess we are in, not that they know how salvation will come. This salvation was imminent, the Lord promised, as imminent as Messiah's appearing.

### **Verse 6**

The sky and the earth may appear to be permanent, but the really permanent realities are God's promises of coming everlasting salvation and righteousness (cf. Luke 21:33).

### **Verse 7**

For a third time the Lord urged His people, who already knew something of righteousness, to listen to Him (cf. Isaiah 51:1; Isaiah 51:4). They were the people who had received God's instruction by special revelation and who treasured it in their hearts. They were the godly remnant in Israel. They could count on unbelievers

reproaching and reviling them. Nevertheless, they should not fear them or lose heart, but follow the example of the perfect Servant by trusting God to fulfill His Word (Isaiah 50:4-9; cf. 2 Peter 3:3-13).

#### **Verse 8**

Their unbelieving critics would pass away in time, the product of natural decay (cf. Isaiah 50:11). But God's righteousness and salvation will last forever, and so will those who trust in Him who will bring them to pass (cf. Isaiah 50:10).

#### **Verse 9**

Israel's call for God to awake assumes that He had not been active in helping His people recently. Isaiah, speaking for the Israelites, described the Lord's delivering power in action for His people as His "arm" (cf. Isaiah 51:5; Isaiah 53:1). His arm had defeated the Egyptians and Pharaoh in the Exodus in the past, here described respectively as Rahab (lit. proud one, cf. Isaiah 30:7; Psalms 87:4) and the dragon (cf. Ezekiel 29:3). Rahab and the dragon were also part of the mythological lore of the ancient Near East. By using these names, Isaiah was undoubtedly stressing Yahweh's ability to overcome all the pagan gods and every other power opposing Israel's salvation.

*(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dcc/isaiah-51.html>)*

### **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Looking to our past offers important insights: about faithfulness, examples to follow or deviate from, the people and events that have shaped us. Isaiah prepared the nation to look forward to Jesus, but we look to the past, present, and future when we look to him. The salvation work Jesus has done is the reason for our joy in the present and our hope in the future. So when you think about whether to look to the past, present, or future, the answer is: all three! Look to Christ and his ministry, his sacrifice, his death and resurrection. Look to the body of Christ that continues to call the world to repent of sins and be reconciled to God. And look to the glorious future when God's promises of eternal life will no longer be a hope but our present, eternal reality.

### **Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary**

The Plea - Isaiah makes an impassioned plea for all people to heed the words of God and turn to Him. He recounts the miracles performed by God in days gone by, and he encourages all to surrender their will to the Lord. Today, the followers of Jesus should take great comfort in knowing that the Lord God is always with them and that those who are mocked for their Christian beliefs need not wander from their belief in God, for God will use His believers to help advance His teachings and His Kingdom.

Recall - The Lord asked to be heard as He addressed the remnant who decided to return to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon. The Lord said, "Listen! Recall your history from the time of Abraham and Sarah." Isaiah reminded them of God's faithfulness. Abraham grew up in a family of pagans—but God called him out. He allowed his lineage to increase in great numbers. The almighty God can bring a healing balm; He can take a desert place and fill it with His delight. This is what the Lord accomplished in Sarah. Her physical body could no longer produce children, but God performed a miracle. He gave life to a dead place, and she gave birth to Isaac.

Be Encouraged - Factual accounts like Abraham and Sarah should have encouraged the remnant returning from Babylon. The ultimate promise is in the hands of a life-giving God. Isaiah was also sending a message to those living in the future. God will regather His nation and bring them home to Israel, even though it seems like an impossible task. Believers can rest in His saving grace and depend on Him for their deliverance from this evil, corrupt world.