

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Isaiah Chapter 48 — Stubborn Israel and the Faithful Redeemer

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Isaiah Chapter 48 confronts one of the most painful realities in Israel's history:

They bore:

God's name.

They belonged to:

The holy city.

They invoked:

The God of Israel.

Yet their hearts were:

Stubborn.

Their worship was not always:

True.

Their obedience was not:

Faithful.

The chapter begins with religious language:

Israel.

Judah.

The Lord.

The holy city.

But God immediately exposes the problem:

“Not in truth or righteousness.”

That phrase is the issue.

Israel had:

Religious identity.

Religious vocabulary.

Religious heritage.

But God wanted:

Truth.

Righteousness.

Faithfulness.

Isaiah 48 therefore speaks powerfully against:

Empty religion.

Nominal faith.

External profession without inward obedience.

God then explains why He repeatedly announced events:

Before they happened.

Israel was:

Obstinate.

Stiff-necked.

Hard-headed.

The people might have tried to say:

Our idols did this.

Our images caused this.

Our gods predicted this.

So God declares events beforehand in order to establish:

Who actually controls history.

Again the theme of prophecy appears.

God says:

I announced.

I acted.

It happened.

Then He announces:

New things.

Hidden things.

Why?

So Israel cannot claim:

“I already knew.”

The Lord is dismantling:

Human pride.

Idolatrous pride.

Spiritual pride.

Then comes another strong statement:

“For My name’s sake I defer My anger.”

Israel survives not because:

Israel deserves survival.

But because:

God is faithful to His name.

He restrains:

Judgment.

He refines:

His people.

He protects:

His glory.

This does not mean God’s concern for His name is:

Selfish vanity.

God’s name represents:

His character.

Truth.

Holiness.

Faithfulness.

Covenant integrity.

If God's name could fail, then:

His promises could fail.

But they cannot.

Therefore God says:

“For My own sake, for My own sake, I do this.”

The chapter then moves into one of Isaiah's strongest statements of:

Divine identity.

“I am the First and I am the Last.”

The God speaking is:

Creator.

Lord of history.

The One who calls Cyrus.

The One whose purpose against Babylon succeeds.

Then verse 16 becomes especially important.

The speaker says:

“And now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

This verse has long drawn theological attention because the speaker who has been speaking in divine terms now says:

The Lord God has sent:

Me.

And:

His Spirit.

At minimum, the verse distinguishes:

The Lord God.

The sent speaker.

The Spirit.

Christian readers naturally see significant Trinitarian resonance here.

We should be careful not to force later theology backward carelessly, yet the verse unquestionably contains:

A remarkable personal distinction.

Then the chapter turns toward:

Obedience.

God identifies Himself as:

Redeemer.

Teacher.

Guide.

He says:

“If only you had paid attention to My commands.”

What would obedience have brought?

Peace:

Like a river.

Righteousness:

Like waves of the sea.

Fruitfulness:

Like sand.

This does not mean obedience earns:

Salvation.

It means obedience brings:

Covenant blessing.

Then comes deliverance:

“Leave Babylon!”

God’s people are called to:

Come out.

Flee captivity.

Proclaim redemption.

Sing.

Declare to the ends of the earth:

“The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob.”

And just as God once gave water from:

The rock.

He will provide again in:

The wilderness.

The chapter ends with a solemn contrast:

“There is no peace for the wicked.”

So Isaiah 48 contrasts:

Religious profession with truth.

Stubbornness with obedience.

Idols with the living God.

Affliction with refinement.

Babylon with redemption.

Peace like a river with:

No peace for the wicked.

The central truth of Isaiah 48 is:

Israel’s religious identity could not hide its stubborn rebellion, yet the faithful Redeemer preserved, refined, taught, guided, and delivered His people for the sake of His holy name; He alone declares the future, rules history, calls Cyrus, provides in the wilderness, and offers the peace of obedience while warning that persistent wickedness cannot produce true peace.

I. CALLED ISRAEL, BUT NOT WALKING IN TRUTH

Isaiah 48:1 — Religious Identity Without Righteousness

“Hear this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel, who came forth from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the Lord and invoke the God of Israel—but not in truth or righteousness.”

Israel had:

The right name.

The right ancestry.

The right vocabulary.

But God says:

Not in truth.

Not in righteousness.

Cross References

Jeremiah 4:2

God says that invoking His name must be done in truth, justice, and righteousness rather than hypocritically.

Micah 3:11

Religious leaders claimed dependence on the Lord while practicing corruption and presuming God's favor.

Matthew 15:8

Jesus speaks of people honoring God with their lips while their hearts remain far from Him.

Spiritual Principle

Religious language cannot substitute for:

A truthful heart.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Knowing the right words about God is not the same as walking rightly with God.

II. RELYING ON THE HOLY CITY

Isaiah 48:2 — External Privilege Is Not Enough

“They call themselves citizens of the holy city and rely on the God of Israel—the Lord of Hosts is His name.”

Jerusalem was:

Holy.

But living near holy things does not automatically make:

The heart holy.

Cross References

Nehemiah 11:1

Jerusalem is identified as the holy city in connection with those dwelling there after restoration.

Isaiah 52:1

Zion is called the holy city and summoned to awaken to God's restoring work.

Matthew 5:35

Jesus refers to Jerusalem as the city of the great King.

Spiritual Principle

Sacred geography does not replace:

Sacred character.

III. GOD DECLARED THE FORMER THINGS

Isaiah 48:3 — Prophecy Followed by Fulfillment

“Long ago I declared the former things; they went out from My mouth, and I made them known; then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.”

The pattern:

God spoke.

God acted.

It happened.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:9

God points to former fulfilled events and announces new ones before they appear.

Isaiah 46:9

God calls His people to remember former things and recognize that He alone is God.

Isaiah 46:10

The Lord declares the end from the beginning and announces His purpose before fulfillment.

Spiritual Principle

Fulfilled prophecy demonstrates:

God's authority over history.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's Word is not commentary after the event.

He can speak before the event and still be right afterward.

IV. ISRAEL WAS OBSTINATE

Isaiah 48:4 — Iron Neck, Bronze Forehead

“Because I knew you were obstinate, your neck like iron, and your forehead like bronze,”

This is strong imagery.

Neck like iron:

Unbending.

Forehead like bronze:

Hard.

Unyielding.

Cross References

Exodus 32:9

God describes Israel as a stiff-necked people during the golden calf rebellion.

Deuteronomy 9:6

Israel is reminded that covenant blessing did not come because of inherent righteousness; they were stubborn.

Isaiah 46:12

God previously addressed stubborn-hearted people far from righteousness.

Spiritual Principle

Stubbornness is not:

Strength.

It is resistance to:

God.

V. GOD SPOKE BEFOREHAND SO IDOLS COULD NOT TAKE CREDIT

Isaiah 48:5 — No Glory for Images

“Therefore I told you these things beforehand. Before they came to pass I announced them to you, so that you could not say, ‘My idol did them; my carved image and my molten image commanded them.’”

God removes:

Excuses.

Idols cannot claim:

Credit.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:8

God says He will not give His glory or praise to idols.

Isaiah 45:21

The Lord challenges false gods and demonstrates that He alone declared the future and saves.

Habakkuk 2:18

A carved image cannot teach truth because it is itself the product of human craftsmanship and deception.

Spiritual Principle

God’s glory will not be:

Transferred.

VI. GOD ANNOUNCES NEW THINGS

Isaiah 48:6 — Hidden Things Revealed

“You have heard these things—now look at them all! Will you not admit them? From now on I announce to you new things, hidden things you have not known.”

God says:

Look.

Admit.

Listen.

He reveals what Israel could not:

Discover independently.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:9

God announces new things before they spring into being.

Jeremiah 33:3

God invites His people to call upon Him and promises to reveal great and hidden things they do not know.

Daniel 2:22

God reveals deep and hidden things and knows what lies in darkness.

Spiritual Principle

Revelation depends upon:

God making truth known.

VII. “YOU CANNOT SAY, ‘I KNEW IT’”

Isaiah 48:7 — Pride Is Removed

“They are created now, not long ago; before today you had not heard of them, so you cannot say, ‘Yes, I knew them.’”

God eliminates:

Boasting.

Israel cannot say:

We predicted it.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:9

The Lord announces future things before they occur.

Isaiah 44:7

God challenges all rivals to declare future events accurately.

Isaiah 46:10

God alone declares the end from the beginning.

Spiritual Principle

Divine revelation leaves no room for:

Human self-congratulation.

VIII. REBELLIOUS FROM THE BEGINNING

Isaiah 48:8 — Closed Ears

“You have neither heard nor understood; from of old your ear has not been open. For I knew you would deal treacherously; you were called a rebel from birth.”

The issue is:

Deep.

Not merely:

One bad decision.

Cross References

Psalms 58:3

The psalmist describes humanity’s early tendency toward sin and falsehood.

Isaiah 43:27

Isaiah already traced sin through Israel’s early history and leadership.

Jeremiah 6:28

Rebellion is described as widespread and deeply rooted.

Spiritual Principle

Human rebellion requires:

More than behavioral adjustment.

It requires:

Grace.

IX. GOD DEFERS ANGER FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE

Isaiah 48:9 — Mercy and Restraint

“For My name’s sake I defer My anger; for the sake of My praise I restrain it for you, so that I do not cut you off.”

Israel survives because:

God restrains.

Why?

His name.

His praise.

His covenant faithfulness.

Cross References

Ezekiel 20:9

God acts for His name’s sake so it will not be profaned among the nations.

Ezekiel 20:14

Again God restrains complete judgment in order to protect the holiness of His name.

Psalms 106:8

God saved His people for His name’s sake, to make His mighty power known.

Spiritual Principle

Grace rests ultimately in:

God’s character.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Our strongest hope is not:

“We deserve another chance.”

It is:

“God is faithful to His name.”

X. THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

Isaiah 48:10 — Refined Through Suffering

“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”

Affliction becomes:

Furnace.

Testing.

Refining.

But the wording “not as silver” reminds us:

God’s refining purpose is not a simple mechanical analogy.

Cross References

Isaiah 1:25

God promises to turn His hand against impurity and remove dross from His people.

Malachi 3:3

The Lord is pictured as a refiner purifying His people like silver and gold.

1 Peter 1:7

Faith tested by trials is shown to be more precious than gold that perishes.

Spiritual Principle

Affliction can become:

A refining place.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The furnace is painful, but God can use heat to expose what comfort allowed to remain hidden.

XI. “FOR MY OWN SAKE”

Isaiah 48:11 — God Protects His Glory

“For My own sake, for My own sake, I do this. For how could My name be profaned? I will not yield My glory to another.”

Repeated:

For My own sake.

Why?

His name.

His glory.

Cross References

Isaiah 42:8

God refuses to give His glory to another or His praise to idols.

Ezekiel 36:22

God says Israel's restoration is not primarily because of Israel's merit but for the holiness of His own name.

Isaiah 43:25

God blots out transgression for His own sake.

Spiritual Principle

Salvation magnifies:

God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Grace is most secure when its foundation is God's character rather than ours.

XII. THE FIRST AND THE LAST

Isaiah 48:12 — The Eternal Lord

“Listen to Me, Jacob, Israel whom I have called: I am He; I am the First and I am the Last.”

This is divine identity language.

He is:

First.

Last.

Unchanging.

Cross References

Isaiah 41:4

The Lord declares Himself the First and present with the last generation.

Isaiah 44:6

Israel's King and Redeemer identifies Himself as First and Last, with no God besides Him.

Revelation 1:17

Christ identifies Himself as the First and the Last.

Spiritual Principle

History exists between:

God's eternal authority.

XIII. THE CREATOR SUMMONS CREATION

Isaiah 48:13 — Earth and Heavens Stand at His Command

**“My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand spread out the heavens.
When I summon them, they all stand up together.”**

The universe responds to:

His command.

Cross References

Isaiah 45:12

God says He made the earth, created humanity, stretched out the heavens, and marshaled the stars.

Psalms 102:25

The earth and heavens are described as works of God's hands.

Job 38:4

God asks Job where he was when the earth's foundations were laid.

Spiritual Principle

The Creator's authority reaches:

Everywhere.

XIV. WHICH IDOL PREDICTED CYRUS?

Isaiah 48:14 — God’s Purpose Against Babylon

“Gather together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols has foretold these things? The Lord’s chosen will carry out His purpose against Babylon; His arm will be against the Chaldeans.”

The challenge:

Which idol predicted this?

Answer:

None.

The appointed ruler will act against:

Babylon.

The context continues to point toward:

Cyrus.

Cross References

Isaiah 44:28

Cyrus is explicitly named as God’s shepherd who will carry out His purpose.

Isaiah 46:11

God summons from the east the man who will fulfill His plan.

Jeremiah 50:25

God opens His armory and brings out instruments of judgment against Babylon.

Spiritual Principle

Babylon’s fall is:

Predicted.

Directed.

Under divine sovereignty.

XV. GOD CALLED HIM, BROUGHT HIM, AND WILL PROSPER HIS MISSION

Isaiah 48:15 — Cyrus Succeeds Under Providence

“I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him, I have brought him, and he will succeed in his mission.”

Three divine actions:

Called.

Brought.

Succeeded.

Cross References

Isaiah 45:1

Cyrus is identified as God’s appointed instrument whose path God prepares.

Isaiah 44:28

Cyrus is named as the one who will carry out God’s purpose regarding Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 36:22

God moves Cyrus to issue the proclamation allowing restoration.

Spiritual Principle

Human success can exist within:

Divine assignment.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The mission succeeds because God’s purpose stands behind it.

XVI. “THE LORD GOD HAS SENT ME, AND HIS SPIRIT”

Isaiah 48:16 — A Remarkable Personal Distinction

“Come near to Me and listen to this: From the beginning I have not spoken in secret; from the time it came to be, I was there. And now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

This is one of the most intriguing verses in the chapter.

The speaker has been speaking with:

Divine authority.

Then says:

The Lord God sent:

Me.

And:

His Spirit.

At minimum we see a distinction between:

The Lord God.

The sent speaker.

The Spirit.

Cross References

John 18:20

Jesus says He taught openly and not secretly.

Isaiah 45:19

The Lord says He did not speak in secret or tell His people to seek Him in vain.

Luke 4:18

Jesus says the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him because He has been anointed and sent for a saving mission.

Spiritual Principle

God's saving work is:

Personal.

Commissioned.

Spirit-associated.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Isaiah 48:16 should be handled with humility, but Christian readers rightly recognize powerful resonance with the later revelation of Father, Son, and Spirit.

XVII. THE REDEEMER TEACHES AND LEADS

Isaiah 48:17 — “The Way You Should Go”

“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.’”

God does not merely:

Rescue.

He teaches.

Directs.

Leads.

Cross References

Isaiah 43:14

God identifies Himself as Israel’s Redeemer and Holy One.

Psalms 32:8

God promises instruction, teaching, and counsel concerning the way His people should go.

Isaiah 30:21

God’s people hear guidance behind them saying:

This is the way.

Walk in it.

Spiritual Principle

Redemption includes:

Direction.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Redeemer who saves you also knows the road that is best for you.

XVIII. “IF ONLY YOU HAD PAID ATTENTION”

Isaiah 48:18 — Peace Like a River

“If only you had paid attention to My commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”

One of Scripture’s great statements about:

Obedience.

Peace.

Righteousness.

Israel missed:

Blessing.

Why?

They did not:

Pay attention.

Cross References

Psalm 81:13

God longs for His people to listen so He may bless and defend them.

Deuteronomy 5:29

God expresses desire that Israel would fear Him and keep His commands so things would go well with them and their descendants.

Isaiah 66:12

God later promises peace flowing like a river in restoration.

Spiritual Principle

Disobedience often costs:

Peace.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God’s commands are not barriers around joy.

They are banks that help the river of peace flow in the right direction.

XIX. RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE WAVES

Waves continue:

One after another.

Spiritual Principle

Obedience produces a life marked by:

Continuing alignment with God's ways.

XX. DESCENDANTS LIKE SAND

Isaiah 48:19 — Missed Covenant Blessing

“Your descendants would have been like the sand, your offspring like its countless grains; their name would never be cut off nor destroyed from before Me.”

The imagery reaches back to:

Abrahamic promises.

Cross References

Genesis 22:17

God promised Abraham descendants multiplied like stars and sand.

Genesis 32:12

Jacob reminds God of the promise that his offspring would become as numerous as sand.

Jeremiah 33:22

God again uses innumerable heavenly and earthly imagery for covenant multiplication.

Spiritual Principle

Obedience has:

Generational consequences.

XXI. “LEAVE BABYLON!”

Isaiah 48:20 — Redemption Must Be Announced

“Leave Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! With a voice of singing, proclaim it, declare it to the ends of the earth; say, ‘The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob.’”

Deliverance requires:

Departure.

Babylon is not:

Home.

The redeemed must:

Leave.

Then:

Sing.

Proclaim.

Declare.

Cross References

Jeremiah 50:8

God's people are commanded to flee from Babylon and move out of the land of the Chaldeans.

Jeremiah 51:6

The people are urged to flee Babylon so they are not caught in its judgment.

Revelation 18:4

A later divine call tells God's people to come out of symbolic Babylon so they do not share in its sins and judgment.

Spiritual Principle

Redemption calls people:

Out.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

It is inconsistent to celebrate freedom while refusing to leave the place of bondage.

XXII. REDEMPTION SHOULD BECOME A SONG

The command is not merely:

Leave quietly.

But:

Sing.

Declare.

Spiritual Principle

Grace should become:

Testimony.

XXIII. GOD PROVIDES IN THE DESERT

Isaiah 48:21 — Water from the Rock

“They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts; He made water flow from the rock for them; He split the rock and water gushed out.”

The new deliverance recalls:

The Exodus.

The same God who provided:

Then.

Can provide:

Again.

Cross References

Exodus 17:6

God commands Moses to strike the rock, and water comes out for thirsty Israel.

Psalms 105:41

God opened the rock and water flowed like a river through dry places.

1 Corinthians 10:4

Paul connects Israel’s wilderness provision with spiritual imagery centered in Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The God who leads into wilderness also:

Provides there.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If God leads you through the desert, He already knows where the water will come from.

XXIV. NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED

Isaiah 48:22 — The Final Warning

“‘There is no peace,’ says the Lord, ‘for the wicked.’”

This chapter spoke of:

Peace like a river.

Now:

No peace.

The contrast is:

Obedience.

Wickedness.

Cross References

Isaiah 57:21

Isaiah later repeats the same warning that there is no peace for the wicked.

Isaiah 59:8

Those walking in crooked ways do not know the path of peace.

Romans 3:17

Paul describes fallen humanity as not knowing the way of peace.

Spiritual Principle

Sin promises:

Freedom.

But destroys:

Peace.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You cannot reject the Prince of truth and manufacture lasting peace from rebellion.

XXV. TRUE RELIGION VERSUS EMPTY PROFESSION

Israel said:

Lord.

Holy city.

God of Israel.

But God said:

Not in truth.

Spiritual Principle

Profession must be joined by:

Reality.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The name “Israel” on the lips means little if rebellion rules the heart.

XXVI. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT HYPOCRISY

External identity:

Can conceal inward rebellion.

Spiritual Principle

God examines:

Truth.

Not merely:

Labels.

XXVII. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT PROPHECY

God announces:

Former things.

New things.

Hidden things.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Prophecy prevents idols and human pride from stealing credit for what belongs to God.

XXVIII. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT STUBBORNNESS

Iron neck.

Bronze forehead.

Closed ear.

Spiritual Principle

Persistent resistance eventually becomes:

Character.

XXIX. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT GOD'S NAME

God delays:

Anger.

Preserves:

People.

Acts:

For His name.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's name is the guarantee that grace will never become detached from truth, holiness, or faithfulness.

XXX. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT AFFLICTION

Affliction is called:

A furnace.

Spiritual Principle

Suffering can become:

Refining.

But suffering itself is not automatically:

Sanctifying.

The heart must:

Respond.

XXXI. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT GLORY

God says:

“I will not yield My glory to another.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every work of redemption ultimately returns praise to:

God.

XXXII. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT CREATION

Earth.

Heavens.

All respond to:

God.

Spiritual Principle

The Creator cannot be:

Outvoted by creation.

XXXIII. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT CYRUS

God:

Calls.

Brings.

Uses.

Prosper his mission.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Cyrus remains the instrument.

God remains the Author of the larger purpose.

XXXIV. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT GUIDANCE

God teaches:

What is best.

Directs:

The way.

Spiritual Principle

God's commands are:

Guidance.

Not arbitrary restriction.

XXXV. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT OBEDIENCE

Obedience connects with:

Peace.

Righteousness.

Generational blessing.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Many lost blessings begin with the sentence:

“If only you had listened.”

XXXVI. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT REDEMPTION

Redemption means:

Leaving Babylon.

Spiritual Principle

Deliverance changes:

Location.

Allegiance.

Direction.

XXXVII. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT TESTIMONY

The redeemed are told:

Proclaim.

Declare.

Sing.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Redemption was never intended to remain a private secret.

XXXVIII. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT PROVISION

Desert:

No water.

Rock:

Water.

Spiritual Principle

God's provision does not depend on:

Ordinary sources.

XXXIX. WHAT ISAIAH 48 TEACHES ABOUT PEACE

Peace is not:

Mere absence of trouble.

It is linked with:

Right relationship.

Obedience.

Righteousness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

True peace is not found by removing God's commands but by walking within God's wisdom.

XL. GOD KNEW ISRAEL'S HEART

Nothing surprised:

Him.

Spiritual Principle

God's grace is not based on:

Naivety.

XLI. OBSTINATE PEOPLE STILL RECEIVE PROPHECY

Why keep speaking?

Because:

Mercy.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's repeated warnings are evidence that He has not stopped calling the stubborn heart.

XLII. IDOLS CANNOT TAKE CREDIT

God predicts first.

Spiritual Principle

Revelation protects:

Glory.

XLIII. “HIDDEN THINGS”

God knows what we:

Do not.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Mystery belongs to our limitations, not to a lack of knowledge in God.

XLIV. “YOU WERE A REBEL FROM BIRTH”

Strong language.

Spiritual Principle

Sin is not merely:

Bad environment.

It is a problem deep within:

Human nature.

XLV. GOD RESTRAINS ANGER

Judgment deserved.

Mercy extended.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every delayed judgment is an opportunity to recognize:

Mercy.

XLVI. REFINED, NOT DESTROYED

The furnace could have:

Consumed.

God uses it to:

Refine.

Spiritual Principle

Discipline can be redemptive rather than merely:

Destructive.

XLVII. GOD'S OWN SAKE

Repeated twice.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The repetition tells us to stop looking for the final reason in Israel and look to:

God.

XLVIII. THE FIRST AND LAST

No rival:

Before.

After.

Spiritual Principle

God's identity is:

Eternal.

XLIX. EARTH AND HEAVENS STAND UP

Creation is pictured as:

Responding to command.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The universe is more obedient to its Creator than stubborn hearts often are.

L. WHICH IDOL FORETOLD THIS?

Answer:

None.

Spiritual Principle

False gods are always:

Late to history.

LI. CYRUS AGAIN

Isaiah keeps returning to:

Cyrus.

Why?

To prove:

God governs international events.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Repeated prophecy is repeated evidence of sovereignty.

LII. “HE WILL SUCCEED”

The outcome rests on:

God’s purpose.

Spiritual Principle

A divine assignment cannot fail because of a human obstacle unless God permits it.

LIII. “COME NEAR AND LISTEN”

God is still:

Speaking.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The God who rebukes also invites people closer to hear.

LIV. “I HAVE NOT SPOKEN IN SECRET”

God’s revelation is:

Public.

Spiritual Principle

The Lord does not hide truth in order to:

Trick seekers.

LV. THE LORD GOD, THE SENT ONE, AND THE SPIRIT

A remarkable triadic pattern.

Spiritual Principle

The verse prepares Christian readers to appreciate the later fullness of revelation concerning:

Father.

Son.

Spirit.

LVI. THE REDEEMER IS A TEACHER

God does not only:

Forgive.

He instructs.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A salvation that refuses God’s instruction has misunderstood the Redeemer.

LVII. “WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU”

God’s commands flow from:

Wisdom.

Spiritual Principle

God knows what leads to:

Life.

LVIII. “THE WAY YOU SHOULD GO”

There is:

A way.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The God who knows the destination also knows the road.

LIX. “IF ONLY”

Few phrases are more:

Tragic.

Spiritual Principle

Disobedience creates:

Unnecessary sorrow.

LX. PEACE LIKE A RIVER

Steady.

Flowing.

Abundant.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Obedience does not guarantee an easy life, but it protects the heart from many self-created storms.

LXI. RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE WAVES

Continuous.

Powerful.

Spiritual Principle

A righteous life is not:

One isolated act.

It is repeated movement in:

God's direction.

LXII. DESCENDANTS LIKE SAND

Obedience affects:

Generations.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Today's faithfulness may become tomorrow's inheritance.

LXIII. LEAVE BABYLON

Freedom demands:

Movement.

Spiritual Principle

You cannot fully embrace redemption while clinging to captivity.

LXIV. FLEE THE CHALDEANS

Urgency.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When God opens the door out of bondage, do not decorate the prison cell.

LXV. VOICE OF SINGING

Redemption should sound:

Joyful.

Spiritual Principle

Grace produces:

Praise.

LXVI. DECLARE IT TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

The message expands:

Globally.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

What God does for His people becomes testimony to:

The world.

LXVII. “THE LORD HAS REDEEMED”

Not:

Cyrus has redeemed.

The Lord:

Has.

Spiritual Principle

The human instrument must never receive the glory belonging to:

God.

LXVIII. DESERT PROVISION

Deliverance does not mean:

No wilderness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Freedom may lead through hard terrain, but the Redeemer provides along the way.

LXIX. WATER FROM ROCK

Impossible source.

Real provision.

Spiritual Principle

God is not restricted to:

Expected supply lines.

LXX. “NO PEACE”

The chapter ends:

Sharply.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The peace God offers cannot be separated from the God who offers it.

LXXI. ISAIAH 47 AND ISAIAH 48

Isaiah 47

Babylon:

Falls.

Isaiah 48

Israel is told:

Leave Babylon.

Key Truth

God does not merely judge the place of captivity; He calls His people to come out of it.

LXXII. ISAIAH 46–48

Isaiah 46

Idols cannot carry.

Isaiah 47

Babylon cannot save.

Isaiah 48

God redeems and leads His people out.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The collapse of false gods and false empires prepares the way for the call to trust the true Redeemer.

LXXIII. ISAIAH 43 AND ISAIAH 48

Isaiah 43

God says:

“I am doing a new thing.”

Isaiah 48

God says:

“I announce new things.”

Spiritual Principle

God’s new work is never separated from:

God’s revealed purpose.

LXXIV. ISAIAH 45 AND ISAIAH 48

Isaiah 45

Cyrus is:

Called.

Isaiah 48

Cyrus succeeds in:

His mission.

Key Truth

What God announces in one chapter becomes the basis for confidence in the next.

LXXV. ELEVEN GREAT CONTRASTS IN ISAIAH 48

- 1. Religious Name → Unrighteous Heart**
- 2. Prophetic Truth → Idolatrous Claims**
- 3. Open Revelation → Closed Ears**
- 4. Rebellion → Restrained Anger**
- 5. Affliction → Refinement**
- 6. Human Glory → God's Glory**
- 7. Idols → First and Last**
- 8. Babylon → Redemption**
- 9. Disobedience → Peace Like a River**
- 10. Wilderness → Water from the Rock**
- 11. Righteous Peace → No Peace for the Wicked**

Key Truth

Isaiah 48 exposes the difference between outward religion and inward faithfulness while showing that God remains Redeemer, Teacher, Guide, Provider, and sovereign Lord despite Israel's stubbornness.

LXXVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What problem does God identify in verse 1?

Israel invokes His name but not in truth or righteousness.

Question 2

What does Israel rely upon outwardly?

Its connection to the holy city and the God of Israel.

Question 3

Why did God declare events beforehand?

So Israel could not credit idols for what God accomplished.

Question 4

How does God describe Israel's stubbornness?

Like an iron neck and bronze forehead.

Question 5

What does God announce in verses 6–7?

New and hidden things Israel had not previously known.

Question 6

Why does God reveal new things?

So Israel cannot boast that it already knew them.

Question 7

How does God describe Israel from early history?

As treacherous and rebellious.

Question 8

Why does God defer His anger?

For His name's sake and the sake of His praise.

Question 9

Where does God say He refined Israel?

In the furnace of affliction.

Question 10

Whose glory will God not give to another?

His own.

Question 11

How does God identify Himself in verse 12?

As the First and the Last.

Question 12

What did God create?

Earth and heavens.

Question 13

Who carries out God's purpose against Babylon?

The ruler God has called, in context pointing to Cyrus.

Question 14

Why will Cyrus succeed?

Because God has called and brought him for that mission.

Question 15

What is significant about verse 16?

It speaks of the Lord God, a sent speaker, and the Spirit in a remarkable personal distinction.

Question 16

How does God identify Himself in verse 17?

As Redeemer, Holy One, Lord, Teacher, and Guide.

Question 17

What does God teach His people?

What is best for them.

Question 18

What could Israel have experienced through obedience?

Peace like a river and righteousness like waves of the sea.

Question 19

What command is given in verse 20?

Leave Babylon.

Question 20

How should redemption be announced?

With singing and proclamation to the ends of the earth.

Question 21

Who is the true Redeemer?

The Lord.

Question 22

How did God provide in the wilderness?

He brought water from the rock.

Question 23

What does the chapter say about the wicked?

There is no peace for them.

Question 24

What is the central warning of the chapter?

Religious identity without truth and obedience cannot substitute for genuine faithfulness.

LXXVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Isaiah 48 asks several searching questions.

Do I Use Christian Language Without Walking in Truth?

Do I say:

Lord.

Faith.

Bible.

Church.

Prayer.

While resisting:

God's commands?

Am I relying on:

Religious heritage?

A church background?

A title?

A reputation?

Instead of:

Present obedience?

Is my neck:

Stiff?

Am I refusing to bend where God has clearly spoken?

Is there something God has repeatedly warned me about that I still:

Resist?

Do I remember that God knows:

My heart?

Am I giving credit to:

Luck?

Fate?

Politics?

People?

When God deserves:

Glory?

How have trials been:

Refining me?

Am I learning in the furnace?

Or merely:

Enduring heat?

Do I care more about:

My reputation?

Or:

God's glory?

Do I trust the God who says:

“I am the First and I am the Last”?

Do I believe He knows:

What is best for me?

Am I allowing Him to:

Teach?

Direct?

Correct?

What peace have I forfeited through:

Disobedience?

What would it look like to:

Pay attention now?

Is God calling me to:

Leave Babylon?

Some environment?

Habit?

Bondage?

Compromise?

Am I celebrating redemption while still emotionally living in:

Captivity?

Do I trust God to provide:

Water in the desert?

Am I seeking peace while continuing in:

Wickedness?

LXXVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Redeemer Does Not Only Break Chains—He Teaches You How to Walk Free”

God says:

“I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.”

Principle:

Redemption is not merely release from captivity; it is a new life of listening, learning, following, and walking in the way of the Redeemer.

LXXIX. HOLY LANGUAGE, UNHOLY HEART

Israel’s lips:

Right.

Heart:

Wrong.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Orthodox vocabulary cannot compensate for disobedient living.

LXXX. THE HOLY CITY COULD NOT SAVE THEM

Jerusalem had:

Privilege.

Spiritual Principle

Being close to sacred things is not the same as:

Being close to God.

LXXXI. GOD SPOKE BEFORE HE ACTED

Prophecy establishes:

Authority.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

When fulfillment arrives, faith can look back and say:

God told us.

LXXXII. THE IRON NECK

Refusal to:

Turn.

Spiritual Principle

Repentance requires:

Bending.

LXXXIII. THE BRONZE FOREHEAD

Unashamed resistance.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A hardened heart can eventually become proud of what should produce repentance.

LXXXIV. IDOLS STEAL CREDIT

God prevents:

That theft.

Spiritual Principle

False worship tries to assign God's work to:

Created substitutes.

LXXXV. NEW THINGS

God reveals:

More.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Past revelation should make us humbler before what only God can still reveal.

LXXXVI. “I KNEW IT”

Human pride loves:

Retrospective certainty.

Spiritual Principle

God’s prophecy removes:

That boast.

LXXXVII. REBEL FROM BIRTH

The need for grace is:

Deep.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Humanity needs more than better information; it needs a changed heart.

LXXXVIII. DEFERRED ANGER

Judgment:

Delayed.

Spiritual Principle

Delay is:

Mercy.

LXXXIX. FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

Heat reveals:

Content.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The furnace may show us what comfort kept hidden.

XC. NOT AS SILVER

Israel is not merely:

Metal.

Spiritual Principle

God's refining work is:

Personal.

Covenantal.

Moral.

XCI. GOD'S NAME

His reputation among:

Nations.

His covenant identity.

His holiness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's commitment to His name is a commitment to be truly who He has revealed Himself to be.

XCII. FIRST AND LAST

Nothing exists:

Outside.

Spiritual Principle

Every empire fits between:

God's beginning and end.

XCIII. HEAVENS STAND TOGETHER

Creation obeys:

Immediately.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The stars do not argue with their Creator.

Humans often do.

XCIV. IDOLS CANNOT PREDICT

Again:

Silence.

Spiritual Principle

False gods always fail the test of:

Sovereign knowledge.

XCV. GOD'S CHOSEN INSTRUMENT AGAINST BABYLON

Cyrus remains:

Instrument.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God can use one empire to bring down another while remaining Lord over both.

XCVI. "I HAVE CALLED HIM"

Initiative belongs to:

God.

Spiritual Principle

Divine purpose precedes:

Human movement.

XCVII. “I HAVE BROUGHT HIM”

Providence creates:

Location.

Opportunity.

Timing.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God not only calls instruments; He places them where His purpose requires.

XCVIII. “HE WILL SUCCEED”

Not because:

He is invincible.

Because:

God’s assignment will be fulfilled.

Spiritual Principle

Success is ultimately measured by:

Divine purpose.

XCIX. “COME NEAR”

The God of infinite greatness invites:

Listening.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The sovereign God is not inaccessible to the humble listener.

C. THE SENT ONE

Verse 16 contains:

Mission.

Spiritual Principle

God's saving work involves:

Sending.

CI. THE SPIRIT

The Spirit is:

Present.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's redemptive mission is inseparable from the work of His Spirit.

CII. THE REDEEMER AS TEACHER

Some want:

Rescue.

Not:

Instruction.

Spiritual Principle

God's salvation includes:

Formation.

CIII. THE REDEEMER AS GUIDE

Direction belongs to:

Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The One who bought you has the right to lead you.

CIV. "WHAT IS BEST"

We often assume:

We know.

Spiritual Principle

Obedience begins by trusting:

God's wisdom.

CV. PEACE LIKE A RIVER

Not:

A stagnant pond.

A river.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's peace is meant to flow through a life aligned with His truth.

CVI. RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE THE SEA

Abundant.

Continuing.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness is meant to become:

A pattern.

CVII. GENERATIONAL BLESSING

Children and descendants are mentioned.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Obedience never concerns only the individual.

CVIII. LEAVE BABYLON

God's command is:

Clear.

Spiritual Principle

There is a time to stop negotiating with bondage and:

Leave.

CIX. SING WHILE LEAVING

Redemption is:

Joyful.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The sound of freedom should be praise.

CX. DECLARE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

God's saving work becomes:

Mission.

Spiritual Principle

Personal redemption creates public:

Witness.

CXI. WATER IN THE DESERT

Provision follows:

Leading.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's route may be dry, but His resources are not.

CXII. ROCK SPLIT OPEN

Hard place.

Life-giving water.

Spiritual Principle

God can bring provision from what looks:

Completely unproductive.

CXIII. NO PEACE FOR WICKEDNESS

The chapter refuses:

Cheap peace.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God does not promise peace to a path He calls wicked.

CXIV. ISAIAH 48 AND THE GOSPEL PATTERN

Rebellion.

Mercy.

Refining.

Revelation.

Redemption.

Departure from bondage.

Provision.

Peace.

Spiritual Principle

The chapter's movement anticipates the larger biblical pattern:

God rescues people not merely from judgment, but into a life of listening and walking with Him.

CXV. TEN GREAT MOVEMENTS IN ISAIAH 48

1. Israel's Hypocrisy Is Exposed

They invoke God without truth and righteousness.

2. God Defends His Prophetic Glory

He announced events beforehand so idols could not claim credit.

3. Israel's Stubbornness Is Revealed

Iron neck, bronze forehead, rebellious heart.

4. God Restrains Judgment

For His name and praise.

5. God Refines His People

The furnace of affliction becomes a place of testing.

6. God Declares His Eternal Identity

First, Last, Creator, Sovereign.

7. God Directs Cyrus Against Babylon

The appointed instrument fulfills His purpose.

8. The Redeemer Teaches and Guides

God reveals the way that is best.

9. Obedience Is Linked with Peace

Peace like a river and righteousness like waves.

10. God Calls His People Out of Babylon

Redemption is proclaimed, wilderness provision follows, and wickedness is denied true peace.

Key Truth

Isaiah 48 moves from religious hypocrisy to divine faithfulness, from stubborn rebellion to refining grace, and from Babylonian bondage to a redeemed life of listening, obeying, following, and proclaiming the Lord.

CXVI. FINAL APPLICATION

Isaiah Chapter 48 begins with:

Religious people.

They know:

The right names.

They say:

Israel.

Judah.

The Lord.

Holy city.

God of Israel.

But God says:

“Not in truth or righteousness.”

That should:

Stop us.

It is possible to say:

Christian.

Church.

Bible.

Jesus.

Prayer.

Salvation.

And still resist:

God.

Religion can become:

A label.

God wants:

Reality.

Then God says:

I knew you were:

Stubborn.

An iron neck.

A bronze forehead.

Yet:

He kept speaking.

That itself is:

Grace.

God keeps announcing:

Truth.

Why?

Because stubborn people still need:

Truth.

Then:

“For My name’s sake I defer My anger.”

Israel’s survival rests on:

God.

Not:

Israel.

That is both:

Humbling.

Comforting.

Then comes:

The furnace.

Maybe you are walking through:

Affliction.

Do not automatically assume:

Every suffering is direct punishment.

But do ask:

What can God refine here?

What is:

Being exposed?

What should:

Change?

Then God says:

“For My own sake.”

That means your hope is not finally:

How strong you are.

How consistent you are.

How impressive your record is.

Your hope is:

God's faithfulness.

Then:

"I am the First and I am the Last."

The world may feel:

Unstable.

He is not.

Babylon may rise.

Babylon may fall.

Cyrus may come.

History may shift.

God remains:

First.

Last.

Then verse 16 gives us that remarkable line:

"The Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit."

There is mystery here.

But there is also a beautiful truth:

God's saving work is not:

Impersonal.

He sends.

He speaks.

His Spirit works.

Then He says:

"I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you."

How often do we think:

God's command is stopping me from something good?

He says:

No.

I teach:

What is best.

Then one of the saddest phrases:

"If only."

If only:

You had listened.

If only:

You had obeyed.

If only:

You had paid attention.

How many regrets begin with:

If only.

God says peace could have been:

Like a river.

Righteousness:

Like waves.

Sometimes the peace we are praying for is connected with obedience we are:

Avoiding.

Then God says:

"Leave Babylon!"

Do not merely:

Celebrate redemption.

Leave:

Captivity.

Sometimes we want God to:

Free us.

Without changing our location.

Our habit.

Our relationship.

Our compromise.

Our pattern.

But redemption says:

Come out.

Then:

Sing.

Tell:

The world.

“The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob.”

And if the road out leads through:

Desert—

God knows how to bring:

Water from rock.

The chapter ends:

“There is no peace for the wicked.”

That is not cruelty.

It is reality.

Sin cannot manufacture:

Shalom.

Rebellion cannot create:

Rest.

So if you want:

Peace like a river—

Listen.

If you want:

Direction—

Follow.

If you want:

Freedom—

Leave Babylon.

If you want:

Provision—

Trust the Redeemer in the desert.

If you want:

Grace—

Stop pretending your religious label is enough.

Come to God:

In truth.

In righteousness.

In repentance.

And remember:

The stubbornness of Israel never made the Redeemer:

Unfaithful.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

You are:

The First.

The Last.

The Creator.

The Redeemer.

The Holy One of Israel.

Forgive us when we use:

Religious words.

Without:

Religious reality.

Keep us from honoring You with:

Lips.

While resisting You with:

Hearts.

Father, break every:

Iron neck.

Soften every:

Bronze forehead.

Open:

Closed ears.

Make us responsive to:

Your Word.

Thank You for Your:

Patience.

Thank You for restraining:

Judgment.

Thank You that Your mercy rests on:

Your faithful name.

Father, use even:

Affliction.

To refine us.

Remove:

Pride.

Idolatry.

Hypocrisy.

Self-reliance.

Anything that dishonors:

You.

Protect:

Your glory.

Father, thank You that You are:

First.

Last.

Creator of:

Earth.

Heavens.

History.

You remain sovereign over:

Kings.

Nations.

Babylon.

Cyrus.

Everything.

Thank You for Your:

Spirit.

Thank You for Your:

Revealed Word.

Thank You for the Redeemer who:

Teaches.

Guides.

Directs.

Father, teach us:

What is best.

Lead us:

In the way we should go.

Give us grace to:

Listen.

Obey.

Respond.

May our peace become:

Like a river.

May righteousness roll through our lives like:

Waves.

Father, when You call us:

Out of Babylon—

Give us courage to:

Leave.

Do not let us cling to:

Bondage.

When the road goes through:

Desert—

Provide:

Water.

When the rock looks:

Hard—

Remind us You can make it:

Flow.

And keep us from seeking peace in:

Wickedness.

Let our peace come from:

You.

May our lives declare to the ends of the earth:

“The Lord has redeemed His servant.”

In Jesus’ name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.’” — Isaiah 48:17

Central Truth

Although Israel bore God’s name while remaining stubborn and rebellious, the faithful Redeemer preserved and refined His people for His own name’s sake, declared the future so idols could not steal His glory, revealed Himself as the First and the Last and sovereign Creator, directed Cyrus against Babylon, taught His people the way of peace, called them out of captivity, provided for them in the wilderness, and warned that lasting peace can never be found in wickedness.

Isaiah 48 in One Sentence

Isaiah confronts Israel’s empty religious profession and stubborn rebellion, explains that God foretells history so idols cannot claim His glory, shows that He restrains judgment and refines His people for His name’s sake, reveals Him as the eternal Creator who directs Cyrus against Babylon, calls attention to the sent One and the Spirit, identifies the Lord as Redeemer, Teacher, and Guide, urges Israel to leave Babylon in joyful testimony, promises wilderness provision, and concludes that peace belongs to those who heed God while the wicked cannot possess true peace.