

An
Irresistible
Invitation

A Grammatical
Exegesis of
Isaiah 55:1-7



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54.7 יִבְרַגְעוּ קַמֵּן עֹבְדֵי־יָד וּבְרַחֲמִים גְּדֹלִים אֶקְבְּצֵם׃
 54.8 בְּשִׁצְפֵי קֶצֶף הִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי רַגַע מִמֶּךָ
 54.9 וּבְחֶסֶד עוֹלָם רַחֲמֵיךָ אָמַר גְּאֻלְךָ יְהוָה׃ ׀
 54.10 בְּיָמַי נָח נָאֵת לִי
 54.11 אֲשֶׁר־י נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מֵעַבְר מִרְנַח עוֹד עַל־הָאָרֶץ
 54.12 בֶּן נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִקֶּצֶף עֲלֶיךָ וּמִגְּעַר־בְּךָ׃
 54.13 כִּי הִהָרִים יִמוּשׁוּ וְהַגְּבָעוֹת תִּמְוָטְנָה
 54.14 וְחִסְדֵי מֵאֲתָךְ לֹא־יִמוּשׁוּ וּבְרִית שְׁלוֹמִי לֹא תִמוּט
 54.15 אָמַר מִרְחֹמֶיךָ יְהוָה׃ ׀
 54.16 עֲנִיָּה סַעֲרָה לֹא נִחְמָה
 54.17 הִנֵּה אֲנֹכִי מִרְבִּיץ בַּפּוֹלֵי יֵאֲבִילֶךָ וַיִּסְדַּתֶּיךָ בַּסְּפִירִים׃
 54.18 וַיִּשְׁמַתִּי כְּכַד שְׁמֵשְׁתֶּיךָ וַיִּשְׁעֶרֶיךָ לְאֲבֵנֵי אֶקְדַּח
 54.19 וְכָל־גְּבוּלְךָ לְאֲבֵנ־חֶפֶץ׃ 13 וְכָל־בְּנֵיךָ לְמוֹתֵי יְהוָה
 54.20 וְרַב שְׁלוֹם בְּנֵיךָ׃ 14 בְּצַדִּיקָה תִבּוֹנְנִי
 54.21 רַחֲמֵי מַעֲשֶׂךָ כִּי־לֹא תִירָאִי וּמִמְחַתָּה כִּי־לֹא תִקְרַב אֵלֶיךָ׃
 54.22 הֲיֵן גֹּר יִגוֹר אִפְסֵם מֵאוֹתֵי מִי־גַר אֲתָךְ עֲלֶיךָ יִפּוֹל׃
 54.23 הֲיֵן אֲנֹכִי בְּרֵאתִי חֵרֶשׁ נִפְחָ בְּאֵשׁ פָּחִם
 54.24 וּמוֹצִיא כְּלִי לְמַעֲשָׂהוּ וְאֲנֹכִי בְּרֵאתִי מִשְׁחִית לְחַפְּלִי׃
 54.25 יִבְלֶ־כְּלִי וַיִּצַּר עֲלֶיךָ לֹא יִצְלַח וְכָל־לְשׁוֹן תְּקוּם־אֲתָךְ לְמִשְׁפָּטִי׃
 54.26 זֹאת נִחַלְתָּ עֲבָדֵי יְהוָה וַצַּדִּיקְתֶּם מֵאֵתִי נֹאֵם־יְהוָה׃ ׀ וְתַרְשִׁיעִי
 54.27 הוֹי פֶל־צִמָּא לְכוּ לַמִּים וְאֲשֶׁר אֵין־לוֹ יִכְסֹף לְכוּ
 54.28 שִׁבְרוּ וְאֵבְרוּ יִלְכוּ שִׁבְרוּי בְּלוּ־כֶסֶף וּבְלוּ־זָהָב וַיִּן וְהַלֵּב׃
 54.29 לָמָּה תִשְׁקְלוּ־כֶסֶף בְּלוּ־לֶחֶם וַיִּגִּיעַכֶם בְּלוּ־אֶל־שִׁבְעָה
 54.30 שְׁמַעוּ שְׁמוֹעֵי־אֵלִי וְאֵבְלוּ־טוֹב וְתַתְּעַנְגוּ בְּדָשׁוֹן נִפְשֵׁיכֶם׃
 54.31 הֲטוּ אֲזוֹנְכֶם וּלְכוּ אֵלַי שְׁמַעוּ וְתַחֲיוּ נִפְשֵׁיכֶם
 54.32 וְאֶכְרַתְהָ לָכֶם בְּרִית עוֹלָם חֹסְדֵי דוֹד הַנְּאֻמִּים׃

VERBAL
 COMPOUND SUBJECT

Cp 54, 7 * 83 || 11 * Var^{Ka} וַיִּסְדַּתֶּיךָ || 16 * K הֵן Q תִּנְהָה || Cp 55, 1 * 2 * > 6^b (*).

8 * 1 ft בְּשִׁפְךָ || 9 * sic C pc MSS ΣΘΣΣ; L mlt MSS כִּרְמִי || 1 * c 6 כָּאֵי || 11 * 1
 בְּנֵיךָ || 14 * trsp ? huc : || 13 * 1 prb בְּנֵיךָ || 15 * 1 sed v 15 ftr crpp || 17 * add ? || Cp 55, 1 * 1
 בְּנֵיךָ || 2 * trsp ante שמעו in 3.

c 1 מִנְכֵי || 13 וְיִסְדַּחֲךָ || סַעֲרָה pr סַחֲרָה || 11 וְתַמְוָטְנָה || 10 עֲלֶיךָ post עוד + 9 || וְחִסְדֵי
 supra add pr אֲנֹכִי || 17 || וְאֵבְלוּ || רַעַה || 16 יִפּוֹלוּ || גַּר pr יִגַּר || נִשְׁאֲרִי || רַעַה || 15 || בְּנֵיךָ || 2
 Cp 55, 1 > || תַּרְשִׁיעִי || שְׁמַעוּ pr שְׁמַעוּ || (ל >) שְׁבַעַה || 2 || וְאֵבְלוּ וְלֹט שִׁבְרוּ > || Cp 55, 1 || תַּרְשִׁיעִי

AN IRRESISTIBLE INVITATION

ISAIAH 55:1-7

TRANSLATION:

- 1) Ho, every thirsty one,
 come to the waters
and he who has no silver (money)
 come, buy, and eat; and
 come buy without money and without price wine and milk.
- 2) Why will you weigh money for (that which is) not bread, and
 your labor for (that which is) not satiety?
 Rather hearken unto me
 and you shall eat that which is truly good
 and your soul shall enjoy itself in fatness.
- 3) Incline your ear and
 come unto me;
 hear so that your soul shall live and
 I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 even the sure loyal love of David.
- 4) Lo, (as) a witness of nations I have given him,
 a chief and commander of nations.
- 5) Lo, a nation (that) you know not you will call and
 a nation (that) have not known you shall run unto you
 for the sake of Yahweh your God and
 for the Holy One of Israel

because he glorifies you.

6) Seek Yahweh while he may be found,

Call upon him while he is near.

7) Let the wicked forsake his way and

the man of iniquity his thoughts, and

let him return unto Yahweh

and he will have mercy on him,

and to our God,

because he will multiply pardon.

ANALYSIS OF CLAUSES

Code:

All clauses are verbal.

s--subject

o--object

v--verb

m--modifier (incl. adv.)

Vs. 1: s/v/m

s/v

v/(s)

v/(s)

v/(s)

v/(s)/m/o

Vs. 2: v/o/m

(v)/o/m

v/m/o

v/o

v/m/s

Vs. 3: v/o

v/o

v/(s)

v/s

v/m/o/m

Vs. 4: o/m/v

o/m/(v)

Vs. 5: o/m/v

o/m/v/m

v/s

Vs. 6: v/(s)/o/m

v/s/o/m

Vs. 7: v/s/o

(v)/s/o

v/(s)/m

v/(s)/o

(v)/(s)/m

v/(s)/o

INTRODUCTION

The Last Chapters of Isaiah

The last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah are a poem. They are a Messianic Poem. Their ever-recurrent subject is the coming Christ, the redemption of Israel, and the ultimate consummation. The chapters are closely related to each other in a well-knit unit and form the greatest Messianic poem in the Bible. They form three groups of nine chapters each, the end of each group being marked off by the same solemn refrain of warning (48:22; 57:21; 66:24). The greatest of all the O. T. passages concerning the atonement of Christ, Isaiah 53, forms the middle chapter of the middle nine. At the very center of this tremendous Messianic poem God has put the Lamb.

In the first group of these nine chapters the supremacy of Yahweh is emphasized. In the second group it is the Servant of Yahweh. In the third group the emphasis falls on the challenge of Yahweh. The passage under discussion lies in the second group. The Servant of Yahweh, as the personal Messiah-Redeemer who was to come, is clearly seen in 52:13-53:12. Springing from this, in chs. 54 and 55 we have the restoration of the nation Israel and the reigning Christ as Davidic leader and commander.

The Limited Context of the Passage

No doubt the immediate application of this passage is to the exiled nation in Babylon. The captives are summoned from their vain attempts to find satisfaction in the material prosperity realized in the exile, and to make their only true blessedness their own by obedience to God's voice. As is evident from 55:2, Isaiah sees with prophetic vision that the Jews in Babylon have expended much money and time to gain prosperity and riches. Consequently there was the danger that they would forsake Yahweh, would become too deeply rooted in this foreign land, would follow the pagan gods, and refuse to return to their homeland.

The passage is to cheer them in their painful captivity by the prospect of what should yet occur under the Messiah who was to come. The main thought is that the effect of the work of the Redeemer would be to lay the foundation for a universal and irresistible invitation for men to come and be saved. So ample would be the merits of His death (ch. 53), so full and universal the design of the atonement, so rich the provision of mercy, that all might be invited to come and all might come and partake of eternal life.

I. THE DIVINE INVITATION: COME (1-3)

Universal Call

Vs. 1: "Ho, every thirsty one, come to the water, and he who has no silver (money) come, buy, and eat; and come, buy without money and without price wine and milk."

The וּ is designed to call attention to the subject as one of importance. It is more than a mere particle of invitation which Luther translates as "wohlan!", Gesenius as "auf" and De Wette as "ha!" The particle is to be taken in the usual and strict sense as expressing pity for the exiles: Alas!--as in Zech. 2:10-11 (Alexander, p. 324-325). Yahweh expresses His sorrow for the unsatisfied thirst and the toilsome labor which fails to satisfy.

To the weary captives water, bread, wine, and milk are offered. The first and third line invite the thirsty and hungry to drink water and eat bread; the second and fourth lines say that this can be accomplished without payment. Then the fifth line adds wine and milk as freely offered gifts.

The invitation here is made to all. "Every one" (כָּל) is entreated to come. It is not made to a part. It is not offered to the elect only, nor to the rich and noble alone but to all. But needless to say, it is equally true that only those will come who are truly thirsty and hungry and see their need. Wine, water, bread, and milk are figurative representations

of spiritual revival and nourishment. Water, milk, and wine are all beverages of a simple civilization, differing in their operation, but are all precious to a thirsty palate. Water revives, milk nourishes, and wine gladdens and inspires. Expressed is the idea of refreshment, nourishment, and exhilaration (Maclaren, p. 135).

To the Thirsty

When Yahweh summons the thirsty ones of His people to come to the water, He must refer to something more than the water to which the water carriers in the East even today call: "O thirsty ones, water!" אֵל דָּרַךְ is not properly a participle (thirsting), but a verbal adjective (thirsty). The combination of the singular כָּל (every one) with the plural verb (come you) may be either an idiomatic licence, or intended to extend the call to every individual. The latter view is more probable. Waters, floods, overflowing streams, or showers are often used in the Scripture to denote abundant blessings from God and especially the blessings which would exist under the Messiah (Isa. 35:6; 43:20; 44:3).

God's invitation ever meets man's specific need. The Lord accommodates His ministry to human necessity. When men are thirsting for water He does not offer them sublime visions of the future, or profound expositions of doctrine. This offer of spiritual water and abundant blessings is made even today (Rev.

22:17).

To the Hungry

Three times in v. 1 בָּרָא appears. It is used in the sense of "come!" rather than "go!" for the one speaking possesses the things to which He invites. The second invitation receives an addition to that of the first. Not only the thirsty shall be satisfied who might have money, but also the poor without money. They shall be filled. The בָּרָא בָּרָא is therefore a second subject of בָּרָא and a further identification of בָּרָא. The וְ before בָּרָא also may consequently be translated "indeed." In the third invitation with בָּרָא, בָּרָא בָּרָא, a third subject is found, namely that of hunger and its correlate, bread.

The poor, those who would be unable to purchase salvation if it were sold--those who are without money--are exhorted to come, buy, eat. (The imperatives are placed first and in immediate succession to emphasize the magnitude of the offer). The imperative בָּרָא comes from בָּרַשׁ which properly means "to break," "break in pieces," then to purchase grain or food, as that which is broken in a mill (Gesenius, p. 803). The word is used in this sense only here in Isaiah but is found in Gen. 41:57; 42:25.

To the Needy

Actually, the thirsty, the hungry, and the needy are

one and the same group addressed. Each phrase only heightens the liberality of the giver and the graciousness of the gift. These needy persons are to come, buy, and eat without money and without price. קָנָה is a "price, hire," as that which is placed in front of one, "presented, offered" (BDB, p. 564).

This last clause enlarges on the first two in pointing out the greatness of the gift. This can be seen in (a) the rare use of לֹא with the predicates as an objective unconditional negation, thus, "non-money," "non-price." It is seen (b) in the repetition of synonyms: money, price; and (c) and in the reference to the object of the buying as "wine and milk."

There seems to be an incongruity in the invitation to buy without money and without price. But this apparent contradiction was intended by the writer to express in the strongest manner the gratuitous nature of the purchase. Wine and milk are combined, either as necessities or luxuries, by Jacob in Gen. 49:12. They are mentioned together in Cant. 5:1: "I have drunk my wine with my milk." Milk is the wine of infancy and wine is the milk of maturity (Lange, p. 640). Consequently, not only the necessary (water) but the most costly, most precious satisfaction is given to the one who desires it (wine). It is interesting to notice the significance of these two refreshments.

Wine.-- יַיִן was commonly used in feasts and indeed was an article of common drink. Here it is emblematic of the

blessings of salvation. Wine is usually spoken of as that which exhilarates or makes glad the heart (Jud. 9:13; II Sam. 13:28; Ps. 104:15) and it is possible that the image here may be designed specifically to denote that the blessings of salvation make men happy, or dissipate the sorrows of life, and cheer men in their troubles and woes.

Milk.--חלב in the Scriptures denotes that which nourishes or is nutritious (Deut. 32:14; Jud. 4:1; 5:25; Isa. 7:22; I Cor. 9:7). It is mentioned with honey in Cant. 4:11: "Honey and milk are under my tongue." The sense here is that the blessings of the gospel are fitted to nourish and support the soul as well as make it glad and cheerful.

This, then, is the universal call by Yahweh, extended to both rich and poor. Yahweh offers the blessings of salvation to all. Men need merely come and take.

Unprofitable Commodities

Vs. 2: "Why will you weigh money for (that which is) not bread, and your labor for (that which is) not satiety? Rather hearken unto me and you shall eat that which is truly good and your soul shall enjoy itself in fatness."

Next, the gratuitous blessings are contrasted with the costly and unprofitable attempts of mankind to gain the same end in another way. They did not refuse food, neither were they unwilling to buy it, but they mistook for it that which was not

nourishing and satisfying.

Spiritual Famine

Vs. 2a: "Why will you weigh silver for (that which is) not bread, and your labor for (that which is) not satiety?"

Before money was coined, the precious metals were weighed, and hence, to make a payment is represented as weighing out silver. In this passage it is a poetic expression for paying, since in ordinary life undoubtedly coins were used at that time and the weighing was made only for larger payments and in trading with foreigners (Duhm, p. 385). They spend their money for אֲנִי־לֶחֶם, "not-bread." Such a negative expression joined by the use of אֵל may have a various antithesis, according to the context; a superius or inferius may be its antithesis. Thus in 10:15 אֵל־עֵץ is to be taken as "not-wood but something much higher." Isaiah gives here in v. 2 an evangelical statement of the free grace of God, of whose meaning and long range he was probably not completely aware. Not קָדְשׁ nor עֲמָל ("labor, toil" here probably the product of labor, riches, wealth; Isa. 45:14) cannot quench the spiritual famine, do not give מִלֵּוּלֵי, "satiety, fulness, satisfaction." Legal works do not satisfy or bring peace. They do not procure our wedding garment but only our own clothes with which one will be cast out (Matth. 12:12-13). What truly satisfies the soul comes from above and, not being of an

earthly nature, may be had even by one who is the most destitute of earthly things.

Spiritual Food

Vs. 2b: ". . . rather hearken unto me and you shall eat that which is truly good. . ."

The imperative יִשְׁמַע followed by the infinitive absolute may variously be expressed in English as denoting "to hear diligently, attentively, by all means, or to purpose." Perhaps the best translation would be "rather hearken unto me." In these words is indicated the way to true satisfaction. It is the path of obedience by faith, for יִשְׁמַע includes the idea of comprehending (Ps. 19:4), obeying (Ps. 18:45), giving attention to (Isa. 46:3). Isaiah cannot mean the hearing with the outward ear, for Yahweh would not be satisfied with that.

The second imperative, יִשְׁמַע, which is connected with the first by a ו, is predictive (cf. 36:16; 45:22--Edel, p. 132): "Obey my words and trust my promises and you shall eat that which is truly good." The לֵיט is emphatic, meaning that which is truly good, in opposition to the non-bread, which seemed to satisfy but did not. The prophet returns to the image of the former verse. Their only prerequisite is to listen obediently and their spiritual hunger shall be satisfied.

Spiritual Fulness

Vs. 2c: ". . . and let your soul delight itself in fatness. . ."

The third verb, לֵךְ יִשְׂמַח, because it is in the third person, is a jussive. (Feldmann, p. 183). לֵךְ יִשְׂמַח means to live softly and delicately and in the Hithpael stem "to delight oneself, be glad in anything," used even of sexual pleasure (Gesenius, p. 641). The term נֶפֶשׁ -- "soul" may have been used to show that the hunger and food referred to are not bodily but spiritual (Alexander, p. 525), but Feldmann is probably correct when he takes נֶפֶשׁ as the organ with which man enjoys things. שֶׁמֶן is fatness, abundance, luxuriance, here passing over into the figurative use of spiritual blessings (BDB, p. 206). Fat, by a figure common to all languages, is put for richness both of food and soil ("fat of the land" etc.; 5:1; Ps. 36:9; 63:6; Job 36:16). The spiritual blessings of the Messianic Kingdom are richer dainties than any that this world has to offer. The soul that obtains them "delights" in them and is satisfied with them (Ps. 17:15).

Underscored Commands

Vs. 3a: "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear so that your soul shall live. . ."

A series of three commands underscores the same offer Yahweh made in vs. 2. It is evident from this that the preceding two verses cannot have reference to literal food or bodily subsistence.

Attention: Incline

אָזְנְךָ תִּשְׁטַח. The first command is that for paying attention. תִּשְׁטַח actually means "to stretch out or extent" but in the Niphal is also used of inclining downwards, especially of the ear (Jer. 7:24,26; 11:8 etc.) The picture of the command then is clear: "Get your ear in such a position that you can hear." A decided effort is implied. Yahweh says: "Pay attention!"

Appropriation: Come

Duhm (p. 385) takes this clause to read, "go to me" because the LXX has the translation of לֵךְ אַחֲרַי, but as in v. 1, it can well be taken again as "come to me," for it is God who possesses the spiritual blessings which are offered. And any who come may appropriate them. God is not satisfied with just one invitation.

Application: Hear

"Hear so that your soul shall live." Here again the word וְגַי necessarily suggests the thought of spiritual life and this sense is admitted here by Kimchi and Abarbend. Neither of the animal life nor of the appetite could it be said that it should live (Alexander, p. 326). Hearing God's commands and promises, obeying them, brings life. The ל can be taken as that of logical sequence or result: "so that." The

abbreviated form בְּיָמָי gives the future an imperative sense.

Unconditional Covenant

Vs. 3b: ". . . and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure loyal love of David."

Its Confirmation

The salvation and blessing which Yahweh brings is encompassed in an eternal covenant. Nothing is required on the part of Israel but hearing and coming and taking. The covenant is made in this case by a higher person in relation to a lower. This can be seen by the technical use of בְּיָמָי with the dative instead of with the customary לְיָמָי. The covenant has a twofold aspect. It is a promise in which the promiser binds himself with all the force of a covenant (as in 61:8; cf. II Chron. 7:18) and it includes the idea of a spontaneous offer (as in Ez. 34:2), seen in "the sure loyal love of David" (Delitzsch, p. 326).

Its Content

The בְּיָמָי לְיָמָי בְּיָמָי is an expression appended, as the closer specification of the object, to the idea of offering or vouchsafing implied in the expression "I will make with you an everlasting covenant." Because of the promisory nature of the covenant, one may legitimately translate "I will grant you."

It cannot be doubted that v. 3b rests on II Sam. 7:11ff.

In the future God will make good the solemn promises which He made to David. The transaction referred to here is that which is celebrated in Ps. 89:2-4:

For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever;
 Thy faithfulness wilt thou establish in the very heavens.
 I have made a covenant with my chosen,
 I have sworn unto David my servant:
 Thy seed will I establish for ever,
 And build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

The promises made to David included that the Messiah should be of his seed, and sit on his throne, and establish an everlasting kingdom (Ps. 89:2-5; 19-32), and triumph over death and hell (Ps. 16:9-10), and give peace and happiness to Israel (Ps. 132:15-18).

The promises to David are called נְדָבָה, "sure ones," (Niphal participle) i.e. sure to be accomplished; or it might be rendered faithful, credible, or trusted. רַחֲמֵי, a stative construct plural of רַחֲמֵי, properly means kindness, good will, pity, compassion; then goodness, mercy, grace. Perhaps the term "loyal love" would be the best translation. The word order puts emphasis on the וְעַל. Those that follow the invitation shall have a part in the blessings of the Millennium.

Its Continuation

The whole expression denotes that the covenant made with David promised great favors and was not to be abrogated, but was to be perpetual. With all who embraced the Messiah, God would enter into such an unchanging and unwavering covenant--

a covenant promising mercy and one who was not to be revoked. The perpetuity of the covenant is based on its unconditional nature, the veracity of God, the solemn and repeated promise by God, and the express statement that the covenant would be 永久. Its final fulfillment will be, as the following verses indicate, in the Millennium.

II. THE DIVINE INDIVIDUAL: CHRIST (4-5)

His Unequivocal Identification

Vs. 4: "Lo, (as) a witness of nations I have given him, a chief and commander of nations."

By ordinary rules of grammar, the pronominal suffix of לְיָדָיו (have given him) should refer to David; and so the passage is understood by Gesenius, Maurer, Hitzig, Ewald, Knobel, Delitzsch, and Cheyne. But, as Isaiah frequently sets aside ordinary rules of grammar, and as the position of the person here spoken of seems too high for the historical David, a large number of commentators, including Vitranga, Michaelis, Dathe, Rosenmüller, and Umbreit consider that the Messiah is intended (Spence and Exell, p. 329-330).

That indeed Christ is in view is seen by various factors. For one thing, the name David in v. 3 suggests Christ and in passages like Ez. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5, David is named but the reference is clearly to Christ. Further, the interjection וְ has reference not to a past event but to one of either present or future. The וְ at the beginning of the next verse undoubtedly relates to the future and the change would be abrupt and the meaning obscure if v. 4 refers to David and the וְ were to be taken as past. Finally, David could not with truth be so emphatically styled the chief or leader of the nations. The foreign nations which he

subdued did not constitute the main part of his kingdom and the Scriptures always represent him as a theocratic king.

His Unsurpassable Administration

The emphasis in v. 4 is on the nations (גוים from גו) which are repeated without change of form. The essential meaning is the same as that of ch. 49:6. Messiah was sent as the Savior not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles. His relation to the latter is expressed by three terms.

As a Witness

In prophetic anticipation Isaiah sees Christ as an עֵד to the nations. This word has received various renderings. Rosenmüller translates it "monitor"--one whose office it was publicly to admonish or reprove others in the presence of witnesses. Jerome renders it "a witness." The LXX renders it "a testimony," (μαρτύριον); the Chaldee, "a prince" (גביר). The Hebrew word עֵד means properly a witness (Prov. 10:5-9), then testimony, witness borne (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17), also, according to Gesenius, a prince, chief, legislator, commander. He adds the note that the common meaning "witness" can well be included in the above titles (p. 607). BDB makes it "witness," from reiterating, hence emphatically affirming (p. 729). The parallelism requires this sense--as one who stood forth to bear solemn testimony in regard to God--to His law, and claims and plans; and one who was therefore designated to be the instructor,

guide, and teacher of men. He is the great appointed witness for God, and thus He sustains the relation of the instructor and monitor of mankind (Barnes, p. 488).

Christ is that witness. He witnesses to the truth (Jn. 18:37); He witnesses against sinners (Mal. 3:5); and before Pilate witnessed a good confession (I Tim 6:13). The same office is ascribed to Christ in Rev. 1:5 and 3:14. As this witness, Christ carries out to the Gentiles the same gospel to whose believing acceptance Israel was summoned in vs. 1-3.

As a Leader

A לְפָנָי is a prince, a leader, a ruler. It is a general word comprehending even the royal dignity, as in I Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 13:14 etc. (Gesenius, p. 531). It is clear that לְפָנָי (from לְפָנַי, "in front") is properly the one in front, the foremost, and is therefore naturally used to signify a chief or leader. This title is expressly applied to the Messiah by Daniel (9:27) and the corresponding titles ἀρχων and ἀρχηγός to Christ in the N. T. (Acts 3:15; Heb. 2:10; Rev. 1:5), considered both as an example and a leader. Undoubtedly the idea of royalty is included, as the Chaldee equivalent "king" indicates. Christ is leader and king.

As a Commander

מְצַוֵּנִי is a Pual participle from the verb צִוָּה

which means to command. The title may be considered as equivalent either to "preceptor" or "commander," both derivatives from the verbs of the same meaning. Now as both meanings agree with the two first titles respectively, there is no reason why לְמַדְרֵשׁ cannot combine both offices in one. However, since לְמַדְרֵשׁ sometimes means to command in a military sense, but never perhaps to teach or give instruction, the idea of commander must predominate. This commander is the Son of Psalm 2 who will rule the nations with a rod of iron. In other words, the prophetic and regal aspects of the Suffering Servant of ch. 53 are here brought together.

His Unhindered Accessibility

Vs. 5: "Lo, a nation (that) you know not you will call and a nation (that) have not know you shall run unto you for the sake of Yahweh your God and the Holy One of Israel, because he glorifies you."

The Call Offered

The problem of this verse is whether the object of the address is the Messiah or Israel. The most natural interpretation is, that after speaking of the Messiah, Yahweh now turns to Him and addresses Him directly. If this be so, v. 4 could not refer to David, who in that case would be subject of the promises ages after his decease. At the same time, the facility with which the words can be applied to either the Messiah

or Israel, may be considered as confirming the hypothesis that although the Messiah is the main subject of the verse, Israel is not entirely excluded.

The interjection וַיִּקְרָא wants to direct the attention of the reader to the prediction of the future which is about to be made, namely the promise that the Gentiles should be called by Messiah to the fellowship of the gospel. The construction of the second וַיִּקְרָא with two plural verbs shows it to be collective. The prediction was fulfilled in part during Messiah's first advent, but it will find its final fulfillment during His Millennial reign. A people which He did not know, with whom He had until now no covenant, He would call. It was a nation that was strange to Yahweh and His laws, a nation that had not been regarded as His own people. The call is not only one of offering salvation but also a call to service (Job 19:16). The phrase recalls the words of Ps. 18:44: "a people whom I have not known shall serve me." Through His disciples Christ called all nations to Himself (Matth. 28:19); but this will be true in a much fuller sense in the Kingdom when Israel shall fulfill its calling of being a light to all the nations (Isa. 40:9 etc.).

The Call Obeyed

וַיִּקְרָא is usually used of non-Israelites and the attributive sentence limits the meaning solely to them (Feldmann,

p. 185). The nations are called by Yahweh through Israel, not so much as a master calls his servants but in the sense that a glorified nation attracts another. Although during this age this is not coming to pass, the Millennium anticipates an effective call to all the nations.

The וַיָּבֹאוּ is said to רָצוּ "to run" unto Christ. It will be a voluntary, spontaneous, joyous coming.

The cause for the coming.--God's kingdom will be enlarged by the addition of the וַיָּבֹאוּ and Israel's glory will be increased "for the sake of Yahweh. . . because he has glorified you." The וְעַתָּה, then, introduces the cause. וְעַתָּה is a pausal form. The pronominal suffix is third masculine singular instead of second feminine singular and has reference to Christ. The Piel form of וְעַתָּה (beautiful, ornamented) means to adorn. The apparent reason for the rushing of the nations to the Messiah is because of what Yahweh has done to Jesus Christ. He has glorified Him, adorned Him, made Him so lovely that the nations are irresistibly drawn to Him. This glory God the Father bestowed upon His Son by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him to a seat at His right hand in heaven (Acts 2:32-35; 3:13-15; Jn. 17:1,5). During the Millennium the glory of the Son of Man will no longer be concealed but fully revealed.

The cynosure at the coming.--The cynosure or center of attraction of this Millennial scene is וְעַתָּה וְעַתָּה. The preposition בְּ before וְעַתָּה takes here, as often, the place

of the preceding longer preposition (לְיִשְׂרָאֵל) (Duhm, p. 386). Verse 5b is designated as the object and goal of this running hither. They come, not for Israel's sake, who brought them the glorious news, but for the sake of Yahweh its God, and not to Israel but to the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah. But it is nevertheless a high and unique honor that Israel is favored with being the instrument of calling the nations to Yahweh. And the honor that Yahweh has for Israel has its own roots just therein. For this reason it is עַלְיוֹן כָּל־עַמִּים ("high above all nation"--Deut. 4:6ff; 26:19; 28:1; II Sam. 7:23ff). "Salvation is of the Jews," (Jn. 4:22) and Israel is also repeatedly called directly the "witness of Yahweh (43:10; 44:8). The coming of the nations is graphically described in Isaiah 60:9-10:

Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of Jehovah thy God and for the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And foreigners shall build up they walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee.

III. THE DIVINE IMPERATIVE: CONVERSION (6-7)

Unhesitating Concern

Vs. 6: "Seek Yahweh while he may be found, call upon him while he is near."

The passage before us details some of the hindrances or difficulties which actually oppose the "hearing" that the Lord has demanded in vss. 2-3.

Seek:

Yahweh implores the people to seek Him, because the first difficulty is that so many men are unable to make up their minds to lay hold, i.e. to respond to the Lord's call, and on their side to desire and seek what offers itself to them. Salvation is all of grace but it does not exclude human responsibility. The command is יִשְׁאָל, which means "to seek, enquire," but also denotes the applying oneself to anything, to practice anything, and the Ethiopic equivalent is used of composing a book studiously (Gesenius, p. 206). Thus the word signifies the obtaining of experimental knowledge and intimate acquaintance.

As usual, the וְ, when joined with the infinitive, is a particle of time. By a sudden apostrophe Isaiah now turns from the Messiah to those whom He had come to save and exhorts them to accept this salvation unhesitatingly. They are to come now

while there is time. Both this clause and the next one have a note of urgency about it.

Call

"Call upon him while he is near." קריב is the infinitive absolute of קרב, meaning "to approach or come near." The Lord is not near and able to be found without limitation. The day of grace has limitations (Zeph. 2:2). At a certain point the Lord withdraws. Biblical illustrations of this abound. Esau reached a point where he found no more room for repentance though he sought it with tears (Heb. 12:12). At a certain stage people can no more believe as those who have slipped past the fateful "today" (cf. Heb. 3:7ff: 4:7 and the parables of the invited guests of Lk. 14:17ff and the laborers in the vineyard of Matth. 20:1ff).

This unhesitating concern for salvation is urged upon not only the Jewish exiles but the Jews and Gentiles of all ages, since the coming work of the Messiah is in view. That work was so full and ample that an invitation could be extended to all.

It is implied in this passage (1) that men are ignorant of God or unacquainted with Him; (2) that if men will obtain His favor, it must be wanted and thought. God does not impose Himself on men. (3) That the invitation should be made to all since all are sinners; and (4) that the knowledge of

God is of inestimable value. God's incessant inviting and urging could not be in regard to something worthless.

Unqualified Conversion

Vs. 7: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and let him return unto Yahweh and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, because he will multiply pardon."

The second and foremost hindrance to believing is that men cleave too much to evil. They love it too much and their imagining and doing is directed to it. Hence the prophet commands that the wicked first of all forsake his way and the man of iniquity his thoughts. The similarity of this passage to Prov. 6:12,18 is striking.

Repenting of Sins

Verse 7 expresses both sides of the μετάνοια--the forsaking of sinful selfishness (7a) and the return to God for salvation (7b). The jussive לִיּוּ from לָיו expresses a command (Greene, p. 320). With יָשׁוּב and לְדַרְכֵי וְשׁוּבָה individual sinners are in view, yet the address is made to all men since all are such. דַּרְכֵי--"way"--is a common figure for the course of life. What is meant is the evil way as Jeremiah calls it (56:1)--a habitually sinful course. לֹא is a negative expression, strictly meaning non-existence or nonentity. In a secondary moral sense it means the destitution of all goodness which is put, by a common Hebrew idiom, for the existence of

the very opposite. The וְאִישׁ שׂוֹנֵא is the man of unrighteousness, or, as Hendewerk translates, "der Mann der Missethat" (Alexander, p. 330). The word מַחְשָׁבֹת, translated thoughts, is commonly employed, not to denote opinions, but designs or purposes, in which sense it is joined in a parallel construction with דְּבָרִים, in order to express the whole drift of the character and life.

Return to the Savior

This is the other side of μετάνοια, the positive side: a return to God. Man, in the Scriptures, is everywhere described as having wandered away from the true God. The prodigal son returned to his father's house; the man who loves sin chooses to remain at a distance from God. The return to God is encouraged with the expression אֱלֹהֵינוּ--"our God." To the Jew it would suggest motives drawn from the covenant relation of Yahweh to His people, while the Gentile would regard it as an indirect assurance, that even he was not excluded from God's mercy.

Undeserved Compassion

Promise of Mercy

There is a paramount encouragement that the sinner should return to God. He will have mercy. With אֲנִי יְהוָה begins the apodosis containing the promise "then he will have compassion on such a one." רַחֵם speaks of tenderest affection,

compassion; it denotes gratuitous and sovereign mercy.

Pronouncement of Pardon

The phrase וַיְכַפֵּר וַיַּגְדֵּל means literally "he will multiply to pardon." He will not pardon as if with niggardliness or reluctance, but will add pardon to pardon, forgiveness to forgiveness, as wave chases over wave over the face of the deep (Parker, p. 244). The words are not to be taken in a general sense (Ps. 130:4,7; Neh. 9:17) but individually, and to be translated in the future. וַיְכַפֵּר means "to pardon, forgive," with the primary idea of lifting up, lightness (Gesenius, p. 588). This clause too is an apodisis, emphasizing the absolute certainty of forgiveness. The explicit promise that He will abundantly forgive is founded on the natural and obvious import of the terms and is imperatively required by the favorite law of parallel construction, in this case with וַיַּגְדֵּל.

A general promise of forgiveness of sin upon repentance and amendment of life was first given to Israel through Solomon (II Chron. 7:14). The doctrine is largely preached by the prophets but is nowhere more distinctly and emphatically laid down than here. God abounds in forgiveness. This is the conviction of those who are pardoned; this is the promise of inestimable worth which is made to all who are willing to return to God. On the ground of this promise all may come to Him; and none who come shall be sent away empty. "And let him that heareth say, Come!" (Rev. 22:17).

CONCLUSION

Nowhere in the Bible is there found a passage more replete with rich invitations than this; nor perhaps is there anywhere to be found one of more exquisite beauty. While this precious passage remains in the book of God no sinner need despair of salvation who is disposed to return to Him: no one can plead that He is too poor, or too great a sinner to be saved; no one can maintain successfully that the provisions of mercy and pardon are limited in their nature or applicability to any part of the race. It is impossible to conceive of a language more universal than this and while this stands in the Bible, the invitation may be made to all, and should by made to all, and must by made to all. The call of God, the concern of God, and the compassion of God, when rightly understood by man, make this a truly irresistible invitation.

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