

## PRAYER IN ISAIAH

### 1. Jesus intercedes for transgressors on the cross: Isa.Ch.53:12c

Isaiah concludes the chapter about the Suffering Servant with a reference to prayer, *“he has poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, **and made intercession** for the transgressors”* (v12). Jesus is our model of intercession. A further reference to prayer is found in chapter 59 which begins with unanswered prayer; put another way, it means that God says “no.” God’s ear is not deaf that it cannot hear, nor His hand shortened that it cannot save, but Israel’s sin has meant that God cannot save them, nor can he answer their prayers. Personal integrity or righteousness is a prerequisite for answered prayer. God is amazed when He saw that there was no intercessor in Israel, *“And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was **no intercessor**: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him”* (Isa.59:16). This verse is paralleled in a later chapter, *“And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me”* (63:5). Man’s lethargy in prayer spurs God to independent action. When men are not right with God prayer is farthest from their reach.

### 2. Intercessors pray in the house of the LORD: Isa.Ch.56:7

We find Jesus taking the words of Isaiah and applying them to Himself and fixing their meaning. Commencing His last week of ministry in Jerusalem He takes up residence in the temple and proclaims, *“It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer”* (Mat.21:13) which is taken from Isa.56:7. Jesus not only applies these Isaianic prophecies to Himself but at the same time He is authenticating Scripture, which is an important consideration when teaching on the subject of Biblical inspiration. The Isaiah reference adds *“a house of prayer **for all nations.**”* In this small section (vv6-8) Isaiah promises blessing to those who join Israel from outside and embrace the terms of the covenant; these proselytes are promised, *“joyfulness in My house of prayer”* (Isa.56: cf. Acts 2:10b).

You may be unfamiliar with biblical words like intercessor and watchman but these words are the lingua franca of communicating spiritual ideas into our vernacular language of English. Sometimes biblical words are incorporated into our language but they require their biblical context to give them their true meaning. The children of God are not ashamed of the sacred language of Scripture despite how archaic it may sound because the world’s words cannot easily convey to us the spiritual content of God’s words. However, we must always keep before us Paul’s maxim that intelligibility is the foremost intention in our conversations with unbelievers, he says we must speak *“words easily understood”* (1Cor.14:9). Great preachers like Charles Finney went out into the fields to talk to the farmers to familiarize themselves with their vocabulary and to appreciate their daily concerns and needs. Of course there were many pastors and ministers who said he was demeaning the pulpit by

preaching in the common language of the people. George Whitefield grew up in an Inn and was thoroughly conversant with the vocabulary of working people. He was the greatest evangelist of all time. One cannot overestimate the impact of Christianity and particularly the Bible on our English language.

### **3. The total absence of intercessors in Israel: Ch.59:16-17**

Against the backdrop of Israel's apostasy which was fully known by the LORD (vv15b-16a), the LORD acts to bring salvation with His own arm, *"And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation to him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak"* (59:16-17). How often has the Lord saved a godless nation in response to the prayers of intercessors? Surely Isaiah must be considered as a godly intercessor? There are many examples in Scripture of men who strategically endeavoured to save a nation or a city from divine destruction. Consider Abraham's intercessions for Sodom (Gen.Ch.18), Elijah's intercessions for Israel (1Kings Ch.18:24) and Jesus' prayers over Jerusalem (Mat.23:37). I recommend the biography of Rees Howells of Wales by Norman Grubb as an example of strategic praying that impacted our nation and resulted in God intervening miraculously on an international level.

### **4. The Anointed Intercessor and the appointment of "Watchmen": Ch.62**

**(a) A New Vision for Prayer (v1)** This chapter begins with the single intercessor's prayer for Zion (v1-3) and is followed by an interceding company who are called "watchmen." Jesus Christ, the Anointed One (61:1) is the lone intercessor. He always prayed alone during His earthly life although on occasion others were present (Lk.9:18; 11:1; 22:41). In Gethsemane he asked His three chosen disciples to pray, although He prayed at some distance from them. In contrast, the prayers of the early church are always corporate prayers. When we refer to being alone, we mean with regard to others, but to be alone with the Lord is to enjoy companionship with Him. Here the one intercessor is followed by the company of intercessors called watchmen. He calls for silence, *"Keep silent"* which means to be still and to cease from activity and conversation. Silence is not passivity but attentive listening to what God has to say or to see what He wants to show us. Listening to God is probably more important than speaking to Him. Often our activity crowds out God. We are bombarded by the clamour of words, instructions, sentences which demand our attention and crowd into our mind filling up all available space and time. *"Keep silent"* says God, *"remain quiet and inactive before Me I am going to speak to God in prayer."* The Anointed One will give Himself to ceaseless conversation in prayer and ceaseless action. The focus of prayer is for Zion to possess the blessings of righteousness and salvation. Imagine the impact of watching and listening to Jesus praying. The request from the disciples for Jesus to teach them how to pray resulted from seeing and hearing Him pray (Lk.11:1). The watchman was

ceaseless in his watching as the divine intercessor is ceaseless in His intercessions. Jesus was anointed for prayer as well as for miracles and endurance.

Silenced by the LORD to listen we are able to attend to the insistent intercessions of the anointed One. Prophecy emerges out of His prayers, a word rich in consolation and encouragement. Here is a divine recipe where the seed of the prophetic word germinates in the rich soil of the praying heart. Isaiah's prophecies all express similar qualities showing to us the originating source of his prophetic ministry. Read the following tender and strong words of Shepherd God to His beloved Bride, "*The LORD delights in you*" (v4b). I am referring to vv1-5. The saints who are anointed for intercession open themselves up to a fulness of the Holy Spirit that will enrich their lives, spark the prophetic word and make their activities fruitful. Action must accompany prayer otherwise it becomes an abstraction.

**(b). A new Vision For 24/7 Watchman Prayer (vv6-7)** In the second major section we are introduced by God to His appointed intercessors who will,

- Intercede **ceaselessly** (lit.) "all the day and all the night" until the complete work of salvation and righteousness is accomplished. These chosen prayers are engaged in prayer with watchful urgency night and day, which we call 24/7 prayer. Prior to the advent of the Christ Child there were such intercessors in Israel and so there will be such intercessors prior to His Second Advent (Lk.2:36-38; Mat.24:42; 25:13; MK.13:33-37; Lk.21:36).
- They will pray **aloud**, vocalizing the need, *never be silent*" (cf. v1a).
- They will pray **effectively**, *"you who call on the Name of the Lord."*
- Prayer is also **diligent** and **disciplined**, *"give Him no rest."* Many prayers at this point of persistency fail because they do not know how to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit and they are not experienced in this kind of praying.
- It is (5) **urgent** and **pressing**, many prayers in the Bible illustrate this kind of praying e. g. the prayer of Jacob in Gen.32:26, *"I will not let you go until you bless me."* Charles Finney in his "Lectures on Revival" devotes three chapters of teaching to intercessory prayer and giving examples from revivals. If you go to my website you will be able to access these chapters on the internet. If you have any problems consult Graham Gordon: GraJackGor@aol.com
- Finally, prayer is (6) **sustained**, intercessors keep on praying until their prayers are answered. Prayer brings tangible and specific results. The work of salvation and righteousness particularly were the focus for prayer and the restoration of Zion. God answers prayer, but part of that process is to know His will. Jesus prayed until He was sure of Father's will in the choice of each disciple, the following day He appointed them to be with Him (Lk.6:12-13). Prayer restores the church; Jerusalem is made *"the praise of the earth"* (Isa.62:7). When the church is restored the world

is impacted.<sup>1</sup> The language of Isaiah sounds almost irreverent, *“Give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth.”* This is the language of intercessors for revival and takes us back to the Hebrides revival in 1949 when chosen vessels continually and persistently reminded God of His covenant promises. These elect women (two elderly sisters, one was blind and the other was doubled up with arthritis) and small groups of men praying in barns who were enabled to lay hold of God emerging from His presence with the certainty of faith that God had given to them an overwhelming conviction that Revival was imminent. Revival fulfils this promise, *“Jerusalem shall be a praise in the earth.”* Arthur Wallis one of the original leaders of the Charismatic Movement in Britain and the author of a key book on revival *“In the Day of Thy Power”* wrote a pamphlet entitled *“Jesus Prayed.”* He writes, *“There must be deep intercession in the Holy Ghost. For the present *reviving* to become the *revival* for which we long, God needs men and women who are willing, at a call from Him, to give themselves to the ministry of intercession. Whether that may be God’s special call to us or not, we must allow Him by His Spirit to search our hearts and to readjust our lives that we might give to this work of prayer the priority that the Word of God demands.”*<sup>2</sup>

Moses introduced 24/7 ministering to the Lord in the Tabernacle (Ps 134:1-2; see also 1Chron.9:33). A further chapter in this 24/7 movement of prayer was initiated in Germany in 1727 in the Christian Community at Herrnhut under Count Zinzendorf. This prayer meeting began a few days after a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Community and continued for 100 years resulting in the first great missionary movement of the church in Europe. One in three of their congregation prepared for missionary service.

Today 24/7 praying is a challenge to the church and prayer Houses are being set up in cities worldwide. One of the most famous is the International House of prayer in Kansas (IHOP). In many countries Prayer Mountains are employed by the church for watchmen prayers, this model was established by God who referred to Sinai from the beginning as *“the mountain of God”* (Ex.3:1 etc.). Moses’ experience of God on the mountain took place on two occasions of 40 days of intercession when he neither ate nor drank being sustained by the presence of God. The second period on the mountain was concluded with a confrontation with God regarding His real presence among them and is an outstanding example of Moses’ employed in intercession with the LORD and climaxes with a powerful and overwhelming outpouring of God on Moses which is reminiscent of powerful experiences of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as experienced by Finney, Moody and of course many others.

Isaiah says to the watchmen, *“ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth”* (vv6, 7). Notice

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<sup>1</sup> These points on prayer are adapted from Alec Motyer, *“The Prophecy of Isaiah”* p507.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur Wallis *“Jesus Prayed”* (Christian Literature Crusade Pennsylvania 1966) p7  
*“In the Day of Thy Power”* (Christian Literature Crusade London 1956)

that they are given instructions and a clear objective is presented to them. Persevering prayer must have a clear objective and definite promises to lay hold of; only then can the prayer of faith prevail. Previous generations of Christian have understood the meaning of “the prayer of faith.” Powerful examples were given to the church by Hudson Taylor of China and George Muller of Bristol. Taylor founded the “China Inland Mission” on the principle of faith as did Muller who founded his orphan homes on the same principle. They believed that the prayer of faith meant that God in response to believing prayer would answer them and supply their every need. The Christian Church was also prepared to support the work of God on this principle. C. T. Studd set up “The World Evangelization Crusade” on the same lines. One verse that can be applied to the faith dynamic is spoken by Paul, “*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in Christ Jesus*” (Phil.43:19).

I have a pamphlet entitled “Fraser and Prayer” which includes a brief biography of J. O. Fraser and his own article entitled “The Prayer of Faith.”<sup>3</sup> Speaking of the prayer of definite faith for a specific objective, he says, “I have definitely asked the Lord for several hundred families of Lisu believers. I believe the Lord has given me faith for more than one hundred families, but not for a thousand. Do we spend time waiting upon God to know His will before attempting to embark on His promises? That this is a principal upon which God works He has informed us plainly in 1John 5:14, 15, “*and this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that He hears us, we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*” I cannot help but feel that this is one cause for many unanswered prayers. James 4:3, “*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts*” has a broad application, and we need to search our hearts in its light. Unanswered prayers have taught me to seek the Lord’s will instead of my own. We must *get our prayers from God*, and pray to know His will. It may take time. God was dealing with Hudson Taylor for fifteen years before He laid upon him the burden of definite prayer for the foundation of the China Inland Mission. God is not in a hurry. He cannot do things with us until we are ready for them. We may be certain He has further service, further burdens of faith and prayer to give us when we are ready for them. In my case I prayed for the Tengyueh Lisu for over four years, asking many times that several hundreds of families might be turned unto the Lord. God seemed to be saying to me: “Ask me properly. You have been asking to do this for the last four years without ever really believing that I would do it – now ask *in faith.*”

I felt the burden *clearly*. I went to my room alone one afternoon and knelt in prayer. I knew that the time had come for the prayer of faith. And then, fully knowing what I was doing and what it might cost me, I definitely committed myself to this petition *in faith*. The transaction was done. And since then (nearly a year ago) I have never had anything but peace and joy in holding to the ground already claimed and taken. God gives us the ground in answer to the prayer of faith, but not the harvest. That must be worked for in co-operation with Him. We

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<sup>3</sup> Mrs. J. O. Fraser “Fraser and Prayer” (China inland Mission, London 1963).

Mrs Howard Taylor “Behind the Ranges: Fraser of Lisuland” (China Inland Mission, Lutterworth Press 1956).

often have to strive and wrestle in prayer (Eph.6:10-12) before we attain this quiet restful faith. And until we break through *and join hands with God* we have not attained to real faith. Faith is a gift of God – if we stop short of it we are using mere fleshly energy or will-power, weapons of no value in this warfare. Fraser says that the devil will challenge this ground that has been won.

Fraser recalls the time when he was led to pray the prayer of faith, January 12, 1915. Ten years had passed and during that time he had continued year after year in his labours going from village to village. He decided to visit the families in the mountains one more time and then he would offer himself for a more responsive field. As he set out the second morning his host, who had been unresponsive the night before declared that he and his family wanted to turn from their demon worship to God's way. Fraser could scarcely believe his ears.

An example of unceasing prayer for a specific objective, which was the release of Peter is found in the early church on the occasion of his imprisonment, we read that "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 10:5). The urgency of the situation had been shown to them by the martyrdom of James. It was during the night that Peter was released by an angel from the prison. Imagine if the church had called off the prayer meeting until the next morning, would Peter have still been released from prison? Here 24/7 prayer was effective and accomplished its purpose. Isaiah exhorts the watchmen to give God no rest until Israel is restored and renewed. When the church is full of the glory of the Lord blessings will flow out from the church touching the nations of the world. Others followed after this first family had made the break. All during that journey calls came from villages high up on the mountain side, or deep down in the ravine, or across the valley. Not only family after family but village after village made public decisions to turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. God's time had come. (I hope I have wetted your appetite to read the book). A later biography was written by his daughter Eileen Crossman.<sup>4</sup> Both books are in our Library at RRCC.

Scripture provides a rich resource for believing prayer. Intercessors have taken the apostolic prayers of Paul as a resource for intercession. Many of David's psalms are a rich resource for prayer and provide a launching pad for praise and worship. This is because David was an intercessor and a lover of the LORD. His psalms are full of exuberant joy and worship. Springing from His continued prayer life we see the prophetic gift emerge. Isaiah has been a resource for revival intercession. Echoes of His words and expressions are found in the mouths of those who pray for revival. Let me give a few of these wonderful verses,

*"Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert"* (Isa.43:19).

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<sup>4</sup> Eileen Crossman "Mountain Rain" (Overseas Missionary Fellowship: OMF Books 1982).

*“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground” (44:3).*

*“Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me” (Isa.45:11).*

*“But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy” (65:8).*

These verses and others provide a foundation for faith and a vision for the manifestation of God’s heart for His people. Put these verses back into their proper context and pray them through. Take up the themes of prophecy as fuel for your intercessions. Of course I have referred to several other verses in the main text of my essay that may equally be applied to revival promises.

### **5. Isaiah’s prayer of repentance and humble intercession (63:7-14, 15-19)**

Alec Motyer entitles the final part of Isaiah, “Prayer and response: steps to the new heaven and the new earth” (63:7-66:24).<sup>5</sup> He also believes that it is the LORD’s people who are interceding here whereas I am inclined to view Isaiah as the intercessor based on the pronoun “I” in vs. 7, 15 although elsewhere we find the pronouns are plural, in these cases he is including the LORD’s people in his intercessions. He is praying on their behalf and for them. The intercessor Daniel demonstrates the need for confession of sin and repentance on behalf of others,

*“And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, **we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled**, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land” (Dan.9:4-6 see the entire chapter). There are wonderful lessons in this chapter for intercessors.*

### **6. Isaiah cries to God for a further manifestation of His power as at Sinai: (64:1-12)**

This chapter begins with a heart-rending cry from the prophet for the LORD to rend the heavens and come down as He had done at Sinai and do His mighty works among them. Isaiah would have been moved by this description of Moses,

*“Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because **the Lord descended upon it in fire**. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. Then **the LORD came down** upon Mount Sinai, on the top of*

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<sup>5</sup> Alec Motyer “The Prophecy of Isaiah” (IVP Leicester 1993) p512

*the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up”* (Ex.19:19-20).

Many intercessors have understood these verses to have a particular application to revival. I can recall Duncan Campbell, God’s instrument in the Hebrides revival of 1949 preaching on this text. The great heart of the prophet cries out in strong groanings for God to come down in His awesome power among His people. Duncan Campbell talked about God taking the field and men exchanging the affairs of earth for the affairs of heaven. Revival is the LORD’S answer to this kind of praying. Duncan describes an occasion in a house in the early hours of the morning when the Holy Spirit came down, the crockery on the dresser shook as the house was shaken by the power of God. When those men went outside it was still dark but they could hear the groanings of people who were prostrated on the ground groaning and crying to God under deep conviction of sin.

This happened in Acts Ch.4 when the house in which the intercessors were praying was shaken by the power of God. I spoke to a pioneer missionary I met in Kazakhstan who was teaching at the same Bible College as myself and he and his fellow workers had seen a tribe of head hunters turn to Jesus Christ in Papua New Guinea. A movement of the Holy Spirit began during their first baptisms when several were healed. On one occasion their church building shook by the power of God and they leapt out of the windows wondering what was happening! The missionary who told me this was not a Charismatic or Pentecostal but from the Dutch Reformed tradition. Similar happenings took place during the ministry of George Fox.

Isaiah has this in mind when he described God coming down, *“When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the **mountains shook** at Your presence”* (v3). The intense presence of God resulting from revival praying caused men and women at that moment of God’s outpouring to bow before God and to groan over their sinfulness. Isaiah battled throughout his ministry against apostasy and this is the climax to it. There is only one answer to lukewarmness in the church and that is heart rending prayer as shown by Isaiah the intercessor,

*“Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might flow down at Your presence, as when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil, to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!*

The coming of God among His people is also described by Isaiah, *“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside You, what he has prepared for him that waits for Him”* (v4). When God suddenly comes to His temple in revival power men are always surprised, suddenness is one of the marks of the Spirit’s coming; see my Module on [“Revival in Scripture and Church History”](#) which you will get from the website.

## 7. God anticipates our prayers and answers them before we ask Him (Ch.66:7-10)

The final reference to prayer is found in 66:7 and has been interpreted in the context of revival praying. The imagery employed by Isaiah is that of a woman who brought forth her child *before* she travailed in pain. She brought forth a man child which links directly with Rev.12:5 and refers to Christ. The church travails in birth to bring forth the man child. The sparsity and scarcity of spiritual births in our churches shows the lack of genuine intercessors. Men of God like Spurgeon and Finney utilized intercessors who accompanied their ministry. Father Nash<sup>6</sup> with other intercessors would rent a basement, have their food delivered to them and pray for a locality before Finney arrived to reap a rich harvest. Spurgeon had a basement underneath his church. While they preached their intercessors prayed for fruit to crown their labours.

The following verse says, *“Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion **travailed**, she brought forth her children”* (66:8-9). The word “travail” has been correctly associated with Paul’s reference to travail in prayer, *“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Rom.8:26). These unutterable groanings are only uttered by the travail of the Holy Spirit in intercession. Hannah experienced such praying and God answered her prayer by giving her the child she had prayed for. Prayer unlocks the power of God that directly impacts the lives of those who are not yet the children of God. The words of Hannah are proof that such prayer avails with God and produces specific results, *“And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul lives, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. **For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him”*** (1Sam.6:26-27). This verse also illustrates the teaching regarding the prayer of faith by Fraser.

The awareness of dire need must not detract from the positive declaration that before Zion travailed she brought forth a man child. In seasons of spiritual awakening the Lord dramatically saves souls in answer to prayer. In the great prayer revival of 1859 when the city of New York was engaged in prayer at the noon hour unconverted men and women would appear in the prayer meeting to hear their loved partner praying for them resulting in multitudes of men and women coming to the Lord Jesus. Prodigal sons who were lost in the far country returned home compelled by some mysterious and irresistible power.

The young Duncan Campbell who was later used in the Hebrides revival of 1949 was Scottish dancing to the music “Over the Hills and far Away” when he suddenly stopped because he heard the sound of nails being hammered into wood and he realized that he was hearing the Roman soldiers hammering nails into the wrists and ankles of Jesus as they nailed Him to the cross. He could not continue and left the dance with a heavy heart to

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<sup>6</sup> J. Paul; Rino “Daniel Nash: Prevailing Prince of Prayer” (Revival literature, NC. 1989)

make his way down the road for home. On passing the little Mission Hall his parents attended he saw the light on and entered, seating himself on the back bench and lifting his head saw his father praying. He left for home deeply convicted of his sorry state without Christ. Arriving at his home the light was on and his mother was praying. He told her what had happened and she told him to go out into the barn and meet with God. There he gave his life to the Lord Jesus. This story of Duncan Campbell is a wonderful example of answered prayer. Isaiah gives a promise with regards to God's eagerness to answer our prayers, "*And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear*" (Isa.65:11). This truly is *effective* prayer.

*I preached on the subject of Prayer in Isaiah at Leominster Fellowship on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2012 following a series of messages at RRCC. These Notes began the following day from my Expository Notes on Isa.Ch.62 and they have developed over subsequent days.*

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