

## UNIT 2: God's Creating Work

### Section 1: God's Planning Work

*A Book Review From:*  
The End for which God Created the World  
**Jonathan Edwards**

#### INTRODUCTION:

**Q1: What is the Ultimate Purpose of All? How do you know?**

**Q2: How important is the answer to this question?**

**Q3: How do we determine what our ultimate purpose is?**

There are a great many things that the contemporary Christian church has been largely negligent of (both in their beliefs as well as in their behaviors). We've spoken on prior occasions of the importance of preaching/teaching in the church. That teaching is important not only in its accuracy, but also in its emphasis. There are a great many subjects that are addressed in the Bible, and we spend all of our lifetimes learning all of these subjects (may we not neglect anything in our studies). But surely of those, there is hardly a doctrine more fundamental and life-transforming than the one we begin contemplating this morning. I don't think it is too bold a statement to say that this subject is extremely foundational and fundamental to Christianity. There is no grander subject than understanding the END for which God created the world and the reason why we exist. The implications of our answer to this question are not only great philosophically but also practically.

It is a tragedy to miss the fundamental overarching themes that run throughout the Bible... It can be likened to "missing the forest for the trees..." So often we become "bogged down" with thoughts of things of this world that we seem to lose an overarching perspective of what all of this is for! This is common with man... a continual effort must be exerted against our inherent "man-centeredness" toward a "God-centeredness" (by a continual diet of God's truth). In the most fundamental way, our beliefs ought to spring from being Theocentric not Anthropocentric! *Stephen Curtis Chapman* wrote a song entitled "See the Glory" which has a chorus which says:

*I'm playing Gameboy standing in the middle of the Grand Canyon  
I'm eating candy sittin' at a gourmet feast  
I'm wading in a puddle when I could be swimming in the ocean  
Tell me what's the deal with me  
(I know the time has come for me to)  
Wake up and see the glory*

This is my plea... for us to WAKE UP and TRULY appreciate GOD'S GLORY! *Stated very simply – God's End (ultimate purpose) is His Own Glory! But* arriving at a "summative" statement like this is a task of good exegesis... of studying the bible and becoming extremely familiar with its contents, its flow, its structure, its implied and stated purposes... So my task is two fold:

- (1) On the MACROscopic level – Prove this is God's End (His own Glory) by sheer weight of scriptural evidences and sound reasoning.
- (2) On the MICROscopic level – To demonstrate that the general proposition that God's Ultimate Purpose is His own Glory can be seen through specific, careful exegesis of one pertinent example text.

I pray that the Lord will open our eyes to rightly appreciate and apply this most fundamental of all doctrines! My desire is that we be overwhelmed by God's Majesty, that we be humbled by His Glory, that we worship Him as He is worthy, that we trust in Him who is Sovereign, and that we rejoice in knowing this Awesome God! **God's End is His Own Glory!**

## OUTLINE:

### I. A Macroscopic View of God's Ultimate Purpose

#### A. *A Highly Recommended Book...*

1. God's Passion for His Glory by John Piper
2. The End for which God Created the World by Jonathan Edwards
3. **Piper**, "The more I know of what others have thought, the less original my thinking appears... This book is a witness to my calling as a secondary teacher, not a primary one." – Piper relates this to his task of helping people understand the writing of Edwards (one of the foremost theologians of all time).
4. **But this** is really only to say that ALL of us (especially honest Christian pastors and theologians) are secondary teachers. Our goal is to be faithful to the Word of God before every other consideration! Only ONE is Primary (the Lord Himself)!
5. **Piper** himself explains that his passion for printing this book was to argue that modern evangelicalism is being doctrinally hollowed out by its love affair with pragmatism and numerical success. Edwards's relentless God-centeredness and devotion to the Biblical contours of doctrine are profoundly needed in our day!
6. **Edwards** discusses "The End for which God Created the World" in **3part format**
  - a. In the **1<sup>st</sup>** (the Introduction) he discusses the "meaning of terms" used throughout the book – he explains what he means by "ultimate end." Stated succinctly an "ultimate end" is an end that God values for its own sake and not as a means to some other end. (this is a difficult read – very philosophical)
  - b. In the **2<sup>nd</sup>** (Chapter One) Edwards gives a rational defense for God's ultimate end. He arrives at the conclusion through a purely reasoned effort (Edwards sees all truth as one – what reason truly teaches and what Scripture teaches will cohere). He offers four objections and answers them! Great reading!
    - (1) Does this make God dependent on creation? NO – what we have has been given to us by God – it's God's delight in his own work and beauty! He was perfectly satisfied in Himself but was gratified in creating!
    - (2) Does this make God a "selfish spirit?" – NO – God perfectly knows that He Himself is infinitely the most valuable being – Accurate accounting! Also, when God pursues his own best-interest that is also the best interest of the whole! Those who claim this, themselves desire to live for themselves (they are objects less worthy of adoration/worship)
    - (3) Is it not lowly for God to work for the praise and applause of men? – If God's glory is infinitely worthy delighting in it and praising it is an excellent thing. If praising God is excellent, God would be misguided not to delight in it! Praise coming from lowly creatures only highlights the glory of God's grace!
    - (4) Creatures are less obliged to be thankful to God for what He does for His own sake. – God's glory and the creature's good are not at odds!
  - c. In the **3<sup>rd</sup>** (Chapter Two) Edwards provides the Biblical defense for God's ultimate end. This is what we will turn our attention to...
    - **Edwards**, "I confess there is a degree of indistinctness and obscurity in the close consideration of such subjects and a great imperfection in the expressions we use concerning them, arising unavoidably from the infinite sublimity of the subject and the incomprehensibility of those things that are divine. Hence revelation is the surest guide in these matters... *But all of Ch 1 is provided to satisfy us that the Word of God is not unreasonable!*

B. *The Supremely Recommended Book... The BIBLE!* ☺

1. *Texts stating that God made Himself His Own Ultimate Purpose (section 1)*
  - a. **Is 44:6** "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.'
  - b. **Rev 1:8** "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."
  - c. **Rev 1:17** When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,
  - d. **Rev 21:6, 22:13** "I AM Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"
  - e. **God is both the first (efficient) cause (source from which all things originate) as well as the final cause (purpose) for which they are made – what all things are tending toward in the end...**
  - f. **Rom 11:36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.
  - g. **Colossians 1:16** For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him.
  - h. **Hebrews 2:10** For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.
2. *Texts which show that God's Glory is an ultimate end of the Creation (section 3)*
  - a. **God acting for His own sake – Isaiah 48:11** "For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can *My name* be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another. (*we'll look at this together*)
  - b. **The end for which God elects the saints**
    - (1) **OT: Isaiah 43:7** Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made." **Isaiah 60:19-21** "No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. <sup>20</sup> "Your sun will no longer set, Nor will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over. <sup>21</sup> "Then all your people *will be* righteous; They will possess the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified. **Isaiah 61:3** To grant those who mourn *in* Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified. **Jeremiah 13:11** 'For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me,' declares the LORD, 'that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen.'
    - (2) **NT: Ephesians 1:5-6** He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. **John 17:10** and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. **2 Thessalonians 1:10-12** when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed. <sup>11</sup> To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, <sup>12</sup> so that the name

of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

c. ***The end for which we do good:***

- (1) **Good Deeds: 1 Corinthians 6:20** For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. **Philippians 1:10-11** so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; <sup>11</sup> having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. **John 15:8** "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples. **1 Peter 4:11** Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- (2) **Evangelistic Purpose: (bringing glory to God) – Matthew 5:16** "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. **1 Peter 2:12** Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation. **Revelation 14:6** And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; <sup>7</sup> and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." **16:9** Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

d. ***Saints at their best desire and delight in the glory of God***

- (1) **Romans 16:27** to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.
- (2) **Galatians 1:4** who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.
- (3) **2 Timothy 4:18** The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.
- (4) **Ephesians 3:21** to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.
- (5) **Philippians 4:20** Now to our God and Father *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.
- (6) **2 Peter 3:18** but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.
- (7) **Revelation 1:5** and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood-- <sup>6</sup> and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father-- to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
- (8) **1 Chronicles 16:28-29** Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. <sup>29</sup> Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him; Worship the LORD in holy array. (See also **Ps 29:1-2, 69:7-8, 57:5, 72:18-19, 115:1**)

- e. ***Christ's ultimate end in His ministry***
- (1) **John 7:18** "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.
  - (2) **John 12:27-28** "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." – **Edwards**: "We may well suppose that when His soul conflicts w/ the most extreme difficulties, it would resort to the idea of his supreme and ultimate end, the fountain of all the support and comfort he has in the work."
  - (3) **John 17:1** Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, - *This is Jesus' great and ultimate request from which all else flows!*
- f. ***God's work of redemption***
- (1) **Phil 2:6-11** ends with "to the glory of God the Father"
  - (2) **Eph 1:5,12,14** to the praise of the glory of His grace, to the praise of His glory
  - (3) **2 Corinthians 4:14-15** knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. <sup>15</sup> For all things *are* for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.
- g. ***God's work of upholding his moral judgment***
- (1) **Exodus 14:17-18** "As for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and I will be honored through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. <sup>18</sup> "Then the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I am honored [glorified] through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen."
  - (2) **Ezekiel 28:22** and say, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Sidon, And I will be glorified in your midst. Then they will know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments in her, And I will manifest My holiness in her.
  - (3) **Romans 9:22-23** What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? <sup>23</sup> And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,
  - (4) **2 Thessalonians 1:9-10** These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, <sup>10</sup> when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed-- for our testimony to you was believed.
3. ***Texts which explain that God created the world for His Name, to make His Perfections known, and that he made it for His Praise (section 4)***
- a. ***For God's Name***
- (1) **1 Samuel 12:22** "For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself.
  - (2) **Psalms 23:3** He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.
  - (3) **1 John 2:12** I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

- (4) **Psalm 79:9** Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name; And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake.
- (5) **Isaiah 63:12** Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name,
- (6) **Exodus 9:16** "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.
- (7) **Ezekiel 36:21-23** "But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went. <sup>22</sup> "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. <sup>23</sup> "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.
- (8) **Matthew 19:29** "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.
- (9) **Psalm 148:13** Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above earth and heaven.

b. *For God's Perfections and Praise*

- (1) **1 Peter 2:9** But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
- (2) **Isaiah 43:21** "The people whom I formed for Myself Will declare My praise.
- (3) **Psalm 106:8** Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known.
- (4) **Romans 3:25-26** whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- (5) **Ephesians 2:4-7** But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- (6) *Eph 1 – "to the praise of His glory"*
- (7) **Jeremiah 33:8-9** 'I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. <sup>9</sup> 'It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it.'

4. *How God's Glory and Name are to be understood as Ends in God's Work (section 6)*

a. *Definition of GLORY:*

- (1) "*kabod*" (Heb.) – *gravity, heaviness, greatness, abundance*
- (2) "*doxa*" (Gr.) – *same as above meaning...*

- (3) *Four Primary Uses of Glory:*
  - *INTERNAL excellence or greatness – dignity, worthiness of regard*
  - *EXTERNAL shining of the internal – exhibition, emanation, communication*
  - *HONOR given by knowledge of God’s excellence – praise, honor, see, know*
  - *PRAISE rendered unto God – praise, rejoicing, gratitude, love, etc.*
- b. *Defininition of NAME:*
  - (1) *Usually the meaning is the equivalent to that of Glory*
  - (2) *As glory often implies the manifestation, publication, and knowledge of excellency, and the honor that any one has in the world, so does name!*
  - (3) **Jeremiah 13:11** 'For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me,' declares the LORD, 'that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen.'
  - (4) **Exodus 33:18-19** Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"<sup>19</sup> And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."
  - (5) **Is 48:9,11 (look at Sunday!)**
- 5. *Demonstrating the Ultimate End of the Creation is ONE – The Glory of God (section 7)*
  - a. **Edwards**, “The design of the Spirit of God is not to represent God’s ultimate end as manifold, but as ONE. For though it be signified by various names, yet they appear not to be names of *different* things, but various names involving each other in meaning; either different names of the same thing, or names of several parts of the same whole; or of the same whole viewed in various lights or in its different respects and relations.”
  - b. ***The whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and He is the beginning, and the middle, and the end!***
  - c. God communicates all this to us providing us understanding by giving us knowledge of His glory! He also directs our wills by giving us holiness (consistening in loving God) and happiness (consisting of joy in God).
  - d. Justin will explain how this aim of God and our aim are not two separate things, but really one and the same... Our ultimate end/purpose ought to be one with God’s ultimate end/purpose!
  - e. It will take all eternity to experience God’s infinite punishment (for the lost) or to experience God’s infinite goods (for the saved)!
  - f. In all things God will be glorified! He will accomplish His Ultimate Purpose!

## II. A Microscopic View of God’s Ultimate Purpose

### A. *Background Information on Isaiah 48*

#### 1. **General Info:**

- a. In length, Isaiah ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> only to the Psalms. Its impact is easily seen in its impact on the NT – more than 400 quotations and echoes of Isaiah’s language!
- b. Without exaggeration Isaiah may be called the centerpiece of prophetic literature! In some respects it is *the* theological textbook for the OT.
- c. For over 2 and ½ Millennia (**2500 years**) the words of Isaiah have brought both stern rebuke and strong encouragement to God’s people!
- d. **II Tim 3:16** explains that God’s word is profitable for “teaching, reproof, correction, and training” – Providing right belief, correcting wrong belief, Calling for right behavior, correcting wrong behavior!

- e. Isaiah's ministry was contemporary to that of Amos, Hosea, and Micah. His ministry was to Judea (the Southern Kingdom) and his access to the kings has made many believe that he had relatives with those in power. He lived long enough to see the Northern Kingdom conquering and taken captive (**722BC**) and the Southern Kingdom to stand against Assyria as God had promised!
- f. During all of the international skirmishes, Isaiah consistently demanded a policy of nonalignment and full reliance on Yahweh to protect the nation (Judah's hope was not in armies or alliances but the promised protection of Yahweh). Isaiah's counsel prevailed and it was only Judah during this period that did not fall to Assyria!

2. **There is quite extensive debate regarding Authorship!**

- a. Historically it has been believed that the whole of Isaiah was from Isaiah!
- b. Today, many critics hold to a view that splits Isaiah in 2 parts: 1-39, 40-66... This began from the rationalistic criticism of Germany...
- c. 3 Major Arguments are offered to defend this:
  - (1) Internal Evidence – ch 40-66 seem to speak from period of Babylonian captivity which is 150yr later...
  - (2) Literary Style – different rhetoric, style, and tone in the language utilized
  - (3) Theological Ideas – asserted that the theological emphasis is different in the later parts of Isaiah...
- d. Response to this critique:
  - (1) Internal Evidence:
    - Isaiah ch 40-66 do not anticipate an exile, but speak as if standing within the exile. An accepted principle of prophecy is that prophecy arises from the historical situation and speaks to people of that situation (while it may refer to a future time, it must do so from the present situation). This text is seen as a violation of this principle. But what holds in general, might be the case in every particular. Most prophecy is “forttelling” but there are occurrences of foretelling (Is 40-66 being chapters with much of this).
      - Those who say it had to be someone writing from the exile (later than Isaiah) also have some issues... There are places in ch 40-66 which are not at all in harmony with the postexilic period. There is still discussion of the problem of idolatry (which can be seen as a continual problem for Israel until the Babylonian captivity... but then this particular issue is noticeably absent from Israel's practice).
      - Also, of interesting note, there are segments in ch1-39 (ch 13,24-27, 32-35) which seem to not have an 8<sup>th</sup> century view... As if Isaiah is speaking from the exile... All this to say, that Isaiah's prophecy contains foretelling throughout! Trying to assume different authors is merely due to a pre-existing bias against “prophecy.”
    - “Cyrus” [conquered Babylon in 539BC] (nature of prophecy) – **Is 44:28, 45:1**: Most of the previous argument is based on an assumption that there is no way that Isaiah could have been so specific as to mention King Cyrus (the coming leader of the Persians) who would defeat Babylon and set Israel free to go back to the promised land (over 150yr after Isaiah's ministry)
    - So how are these things explained? – God is the one who controls all of world history! The Lord of History is the one who can allow the future to be told in advance! Isaiah speaks very clearly to future contexts. One of the clearest examples comes from **Is 9:1-7** “... For a child will be born to us, a

- son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God...” (v6)
- Also, if we remember contextually, that the Southern Kingdom (Judah) watched the Northern Kingdom (Israel) fall to Assyria in 722BC (something in Isaiah’s ministry time) and saw the transplanting of people even in Israel (deporting from Israel, relocation of others in Israel), the events spoken of surely had a context in things being presently seen and perhaps even rumors circulating!
- (2) **Style:** All scholars admit that any argument based upon style is precarious! An author’s style might vary according to purpose, audience, mood, age, and other factors... We’ve handled this argument in previous discussions together!
  - (3) **Theological Themes:** Some aspects of this argument is circular in reasoning. Scholars seek to determine the level of theological thought by surveying the prophets of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century (which includes Isaiah, Amos, Micah, Hosea, etc). Then having compiled a “systematic theology” they make judgments on particular texts contained within those very same books as to whether or not they fit the “general assumptions.” This method fails to provide any basis to carry weight of conviction! We must allow for some degree of variability between the different prophets for God spoke to different situations with different focuses in mind!
  - (4) **Manuscript Evidence:** No ancient manuscript provides any indication that the book of Isaiah existed in any other than one complete whole. The LXX gives no indication. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls found the in 1947AD (HUGE archaeological find) a complete Isaiah manuscript was found (dated 150BC). 40:1 is the very last line of the 32 column, with no indentation or any unusual space at the end of the preceding line! Also, in the Jewish listing of books Isaiah was always counted as 1 book (contrasted w/ Samuel, Kings, Chronicles)
  - (5) **Also contextually see Isaiah 39...** Isaiah has just completed his statement that due to Hezekiah’s foolishness of showing Babylon all the treasures of his house, Babylon will come and carry away all that is in his house (but not in his days).
  - (6) **The repetitive themes of judgment and hope continue through to the end of Isaiah... Both judgment and comfort come from the Lord upon Israel! But of particular significance we see the Lord providing the reason for which He is acting as He does in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of Isaiah 48.**
3. **Themes:**
- a. **The book repeatedly uses the phrase “the Holy One of Israel”** in reference to God (~25x) and stresses Yahweh as Savior (meaning of Isaiah “Yahweh is salvation”), Redeemer, and Supreme and Only Ruler. Not only is the foolishness of idols depicted (Is 40 shows the utter contrast between God and idols – the work of man’s hands), but God’s position over the nations (He is in absolute control of the international scene). Assyria is merely a rod in Yahweh’s hand to punish Israel (10:5). Persia (Cyrus) will be used by God against Babylon (ch45)
  - b. **Without doubt the entire theme specifically of ch40-55** is to express the superiority of God over the idols of the nations! This is proved in 3 ways!
    - (1) **God’s ability to explain the past – CREATOR 41:22**
    - (2) **God’s ability to tell the future – LORD 41:23**
    - (3) **God’s ability to do things that are radically new – REDEEMER 43:18-21**
  - c. **John Oswalt says it well,** “Perhaps it is the scholarly understanding of the phenomenon of biblical prophecy that needs to be corrected, not the traditional view of the book’s authorship.”

## B. Exegesis of Isaiah 48:1-11

### 1. An Obstinate Hypocrisy Exposed v1-8

#### a. A Good Face v1-2

- (1) House of Jacob v1 – descendants of God’s chosen people...
- (2) Named Israel v1 – an honorable name – those given the law and promises!
- (3) Spring from Loins of Judah v1 – They were of the royal tribe!
- (4) Swear by name of the Lord (invoke the God of Israel) v1 – way of stating that they saw themselves joined in covenant relationship with the Lord.
- (5) Call themselves after the holy city v2 – consider themselves citizens of Jerusalem regardless of where they happen to be presently located!
- (6) Lean on the God of Israel – “the Lord of Hosts is His name” v2 – they boasted in the Lord’s promises and His covenant – **Micah 3:11** Her leaders pronounce judgment for a bribe, Her priests instruct for a price And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD saying, "Is not the LORD in our midst? Calamity will not come upon us."

#### b. A Bad Heart v1,4,8

- (1) Not in truth nor in righteousness v1
  - **Truth** – integrity, sincerity; **Righteousness** – godly/upright/holiness
  - **Motyer**, “Look at all Judah has: ‘An honorable name, an impeccable pedigree, a true religious allegiance, a privileged citizenship, and a mighty God to rely on – but it is all unreal. There is no genuineness (truth) in it, nor does it satisfy the standards of God (righteousness).’”
- (2) I know you are obstinate v4
  - Your neck is an iron sinew – unapt to yield or submit to the yoke of God (not flexible, not pliable, not manageable)
  - Your forehead is bronze – brash, lacking fear or dignity, shameless!
  - **Calvin**, “There are two ways by which we may be kept in the path of duty; first, if we are submissive and obey good instructions or holy commandments; and secondly, if, after having fallen into any sin, we are moved by sincere shame to repent of what we have done. When these are wanting, it is a sign of desperate wickedness.”
  - **Still see this today:** *People obstinately refusing to receive the truth because admitting the Lord’s existence means admitting His right to rule our lives, a conclusion that is intolerable to selfish, prideful, sinful humans!*
  - **Idolatry is not accidental:** it is the necessary end result of the human refusal to accept the transcendent, all-glorious God!
- (3) I knew you would deal very treacherously v8
  - **Deuteronomy 31:16** The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. **Deuteronomy 31:27** "For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death? **Deuteronomy 31:29** "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall

you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."

(4) You have been called a rebel from birth **v8**

- **New Name: REBELS!**
- **"Original Sin"** – we come into this world sinners, and our own sin just demonstrates our "being in Adam" – w/o Jesus – enslaved to Sin!
- **Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

c. A Perfect Unveiling **v3-8**

(1) **Method – Prophecy!**

- **The prophet speaks to expose this "empty profession" that God would grant conviction, humiliation, repentance, and restoration!**
- **God had already granted His people His excellent Law** which would provide hedges to hold God's people close to Himself, but added to this He added remarkable prophecies and providences in keeping w/ those prophecies all designed to convince beyond all doubt that God is the One and Only God! He alone is the True God!

(2) **Specifics:**

- Former Things declared long ago, acted suddenly **v3-5**
  - This is probably in reference to everything the Lord had spoken through Israel's leaders in the past... **EX) Genesis 15:13** *God* said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. OR if seen to be read by the Israelites while in captivity in Babylon, a fitting statement written ahead of time by Isaiah to their reading of this specific prophecy!
  - *Work against people attributing these acts to idols!* This was done beforehand by God for He knew the people's sinful hearts would attempt to attribute these acts to idols – an intended cure for this practice!
- New Things declared which were previously hidden **v6-8**
  - God had revealed things that were beyond the reach of man's knowledge and out of the range of man's power and ability to bring to pass!
  - **"hidden"** – could not be guessed by political wisdom/inside information
  - Frequently occurred that the doctrine of the prophets was not listened to (in the sense of obey) until later... sometimes generations later!
  - Jews at the time of Jesus followed this same pattern... vast majority did not embrace Jesus as the Messiah (even in the midst of clear prophecy)
  - *Work against people attributing these things to human intellect/pride*
  - **Important Point about prophecy:** it's purpose was not so much merely that we can know the future, but as confirmatory evidence that we can and should trust God. To use it for the purpose of merely knowing the future (like going to a soothsayer...) to make ourselves secure is only another form of idolatry! ***Security is in God, not ourselves!***
  - **Here's the principle:** **Oswalt**, "enough information in enough time so that it is unmistakably clear that God is in control of history, but not enough so that people can become secure in their own foreknowledge and not need to live in continual dependence upon God."

- **Calvin**, “In various ways do men rob God of the glory that is due to him, and direct all their faculties towards distributing among the creatures that which belongs to Him alone, so as to leave Him nothing but a bare and empty name.” – Rom 1...
- **Poses the question**: “Will you not own that the Lord is the True God, the only true God, that He has the knowledge and power that no creature has and which none of the gods of the nations pretend to?” - let’s be honest before the Lord – Declare to His honor and your shame that you have dealt deceitfully with the Lord and preferred idols or yourselves above Him!

## 2. A Merciful Deliverance Guaranteed v9-11

### a. A Limited Punishment v9-10

- (1) The captivity in Babylon was a punishment to God’s people (discipline)
- (2) The punishment, though, was shortened due to God’s restraint!
- (3) He refined them, but not as silver (silver was refined at a very high temperature) – in the refining, dross would be burned off and removed... but as many commentators have stated, “if we were to be refined in that regard, there would be nothing but dross produced (no pure product left behind) for there is no good thing that dwells in us inherently (alienated from the Lord)
- (4) **Gill**, “if God was to afflict His people to such a degree (that compared to silver), they would not be able to bear it; and if they were to continue under his afflicting hand till all their dross, sin, and corruption were removed, they would be utterly consumed.”
- (5) Knowing how deeply sinful His people are, why would the Lord show mercy toward them? Israel does not deserve mercy (never deserved). He does it for “His name sake” for “His glory”
- (6) **David Guzik**, “Does it bother us to know that God allows trials and His refining fires in our lives for His own sake? We should remember that we are not at the center of the universe, but God is. Everything He does and allows furthers His eternal purpose.” - God disciplines us for His Glory! (see **Heb 12:5-11**)

### b. A Last (ultimate) Purpose v11

- (1) With this given as the ultimate purpose – we can have great assurance!
- (2) **This is all a matter of God receiving Glory – God-centered purpose!**
- (3) **Ezekiel 20:9** "But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they *lived*, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt.
- (4) **When** God entered into a covenant w/ Israel, His own name became inextricably associated with the people of Israel. He acts in regards to His own reputation among the nations and their beliefs regarding Him and their “false gods.” God saves His people, not because they deserve it, but in order for the world to know the nature of the One, True God!
- (5) **Matthew Henry**, “It is a matter of comfort to God’s people that, whatever becomes of them, God will secure his own honour, and, as far as is necessary to that, God will work deliverance for them.”
- (6) *Israel’s deliverance was due to nothing else than God’s undeserved goodness!*
- (7) The Lord in a similar fashion has displayed mercy and grace toward us utterly out of his good pleasure to the praise of His glory (**Eph 1**).
- (8) *God does this because He is God (v12-13): The only True God (first and last)...*

## CONCLUSION:

*It is interesting (as noted in the introduction) that this whole process does bring about God's intended effect - removal of idol worship from Israel! May God's Word have its intended effect on us... All that God does is ultimately for His own glory! May we live our lives w/ that one thought bringing captive every other thought! ☺*