

# ISAIAH

## ISAIAH 55:1-5, WITHOUT MONEY; WITHOUT COST

Not only is Israel called upon to be saved, but the people of the world are called upon to be saved. As I mentioned before, some theologians believe this is a continuation of dealing with Israel, but at the least, it is dealing with both Israelites and the people of the nations.

“This chapter [Isaiah 55] constitutes one of the greatest gospel calls to be found anywhere in the Word of God. The language in which it is couched is as wide as all humanity, and the wonderful note of universality struck in its opening words rings throughout as a result of the accomplished redemption of the Servant so graphically portrayed in 52:13-53:12. To whom is the invitation offered? Not to the Jew only, but to the nations of the entire globe! That there is here a marvelous application to the Gentiles of the New Testament era, after Israel had rejected the invitation, is undeniable. But that was hidden from Old Testament prophets (Eph. 3:1-11), and so the passage envisions contextually the outgoing of the gospel to the ends of the earth, not as a result of Israel's rejection of it, but of her acceptance of it at Christ's second advent and Kingdom. Chapter 54 glimpses Israel's response to the gospel and restoration for Kingdom blessing. Chapter 55 sees the gospel call going out to all the nations of the millennial earth” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1303].

It is nothing new to come to the realization that Gentile salvation has been part of the plan of God all along. The Messiah was going to establish justice in the earth (Is. 42:4), and be a light to the nations as the One who takes salvation to the end of the earth (Is. 49:6). The Suffering Servant song expressed Gentile salvation in four verses that each applied it to the “many” (Is. 52:14-15; 53:11-12) as a reference to the entire population of the world. “The Servant died not only for the sins of Israel ([Is.] 53:8), but also for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29; 1 John 4:14). Isaiah makes it clear throughout his book that the Gentiles are included in God's plan. What Isaiah and the other prophets did not know was that believing Jews and Gentiles would one day be united in Jesus Christ in the church (Eph. 3:1-12)” [Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament: The Prophets*, 64].

In the first verse, there are six imperative verbs: come (3x), buy (2x), and eat (1x). The emphasis on “no money,” “without money” and “without cost” cannot be missed. It seems we have a metaphor for grace leading to eternal life being employed here.

Isaiah 55:1-2 <sup>1</sup>“Ho! [הוֹי] Every one [כָּל] who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. <sup>2</sup>“Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages [יְגִיעַ] for what does not satisfy [שִׂבְעָה]? Listen [שְׁמַעַ] carefully to Me, and eat what is good [טוֹב], And delight [עֲנֹג] yourself in abundance [רִבְוֹן].

Ho, הוֹי, is an interjection meaning ah! alas! woe! come! The NET Bible translates it as “Hey!” “The Hebrew term הוֹי (*hoy*, ‘woe, ah’) was used in funeral laments and is often prefixed

to judgment oracles for rhetorical effect. But here it appears to be a simple interjection, designed to grab the audience's attention" [*The NET Bible*, s.v. "Isaiah 55:1," 1310, n. a]. In this context, "come" seems to be best translation (NIV, ESV, CSB, ISV), and another word translated "come," הָלֵךְ, is used in the text three times; therefore, translating הָלֵךְ as "come," fits with the overall context of the verse very well. The latter three times the word is used are all imperatives, that is, they are commands to come: come to the waters; come, buy and eat; and come, buy wine and milk. The commands are followed by the revelation that these things may be had without cost and without the funds that would ordinarily be required to purchase them.

Isaiah 55:1 <sup>1</sup>"Come, everyone who is thirsty ... (CSB).

Isaiah 55:1 <sup>1</sup>Come, all you who are thirsty ... (NIV).

This does not mean these things are totally free. No! They come at a great cost, but that expense was born by the Suffering Servant. Mankind does not have the currency with which to buy what He purchased. It is a completely free grace gift. "Those called are invited to come buy, but paradoxically, without money and without price, because of the pricelessness of what is offered, because as a gift it cannot be purchased under any circumstances, being already bought and fully paid for. All are welcomed to the benefits offered, although all are utterly bankrupt spiritually, without anything to offer and completely shut up to free grace" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1303-1304].

This verse is using a metaphor that involves eating and drinking to reveal some very important spiritual truths.

This is not the only place in the Word of God that uses this picture to make the same point. The Lord Jesus Christ used this metaphor to present those truths during His ministry. Just as food and drink are necessary elements for the maintenance of physical life, spiritually eating and drinking are necessary for spiritual life. Apparently, most of the Israelites did not believe Yahweh as He spoke these truths through the prophet Isaiah, and most of the Israelites who heard the Lord's message at His First Advent didn't believe Him or His message at that point in the nation's history either.

Matthew 5:6 <sup>6</sup>"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

John 4:10-11, 13-14 <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup>She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? ... <sup>13</sup>Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

John 6:27, 32-33, 35 <sup>27</sup>"Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." ... <sup>32</sup>Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who

has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. <sup>33</sup>“For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.” ... <sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.

John 7:37–39 <sup>37</sup>Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup>“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” <sup>39</sup>But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Every one, כָּל, means the whole, all, totality, entirety, and everything or everyone referring to the totality of any object, mass, collective, or extension. The sense is that of the whole thing which relates to all of something including all of its component elements or parts. The root meaning is to be complete, whole. It is used in a genitive relation identifying “‘the whole of something.’ It is commonly translated ‘all’ if the following word is ... singular and without the article” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “כָּל,” *Theological Word-book of the Old Testament*, 441].

This is important to understand because there is a theological system that does not believe that “all” means “all” when the context concerns justification salvation. Five-point Calvinists interpret “all” to be a reference to all of the elect, because only the elect have the possibility of being saved. This, of course, is contrary to biblical revelation. “All” does mean exactly that—all, everyone, without exception!

“There are two classes of texts that speak of Christ's saving work in *general terms*: (a) those containing the word ‘world’ ... and (b) those containing the word ‘all’ ... One reason for the use of these expressions was to correct the false notion that salvation was for the Jews alone. Such phrases as ‘the world,’ ‘all men,’ ‘all nations,’ and ‘every creature’ were used by the New Testament writers to emphatically correct this mistake. These expressions are intended to show that Christ died for all men without *distinction* (i.e., He died for Jews and Gentiles alike), but they are not intended to indicate that Christ died for all men without *exception* (i.e., He did not die for the purpose of saving each and every lost sinner)” [Steele, Thomas, and Quinn, *The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, and Documented*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 50].

This is the standard Calvinist argument for arising out of the theology that forms the basis for their five-point system of theology, but it is untrue. They introduce a logical fallacy called a red herring argument. Christ did not die “for the purpose of saving each and every lost sinner,” which is an argument no one but a universalist makes. However, the truth is that Christ did die for the purpose of providing the opportunity for each and every lost sinner to be saved. The doctrine of election prevents Calvinists from telling people the truth about what the Bible actually says; if they did, their theology would have to go away. This verse in Isaiah cannot be explained away by saying that “all” does not mean “all” as in every human being, because it can only refer to all of the elect in this theological system.

R. C. Sproul, who was a famous Calvinist theologian, destroys the meaning of the word "all" in order to justify his doctrine that only the elect have any possibility of realizing justification salvation. He uses Romans 8:28-30 to explain. "There is a chain there, a sequence, that begins with foreknowledge. Then follows predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. This is an elliptical statement—something is assumed but not spelled out. It is the word *all*. All of whom God has foreknown He has predestined, all whom He has predestined He has also called, all whom He has called He has also justified, and all whom He has justified are glorified.... [P]redestination ... has to begin with foreknowledge because God cannot predestine anyone whom He does not know about in advance.... Paul here does not have in mind everyone in the world, but only the predestined, who are foreknown and also called. The point is that everyone who is called is justified, which means that everyone who is called gets faith, which means this text cannot be about what theologians refer to as 'the external call of the gospel,' which goes out to everyone. This text is about the internal call, the operative call, that work of the Holy Spirit that effectually changes the heart. The effectual call of the Holy Spirit brings to pass in our hearts what God purposed to do from the foundation of the world. *All* who have been predestined are called effectually by the Holy Spirit; *all* who are called by the Holy Spirit are justified; and *all* who are justified are glorified" [R. C. Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian: An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 230-231].

This theology turns the meaning of the word "all" on its head whether it is in Greek or in Hebrew. "All" means everyone in Isaiah and throughout the Bible without exception; it does not mean all of the elect only which is what Sproul is saying it means. In Sproul's theological world, everyone, all people, get the "external call of the gospel," but only those who are elect can respond to the internal call to receive justification salvation. To Sproul and his theological companions, that is "all" who can possibly be saved. Actually, the internal call is not a call at all in the Calvinist theological scheme. In that system, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to give faith to the unsaved, yet elect, person so that they will then run to Christ and be saved by grace through faith. I call this the being born again in order to be born again doctrine of salvation. People are saved by God by being given faith which results in the new birth again, i.e., they are made spiritually alive before they knowingly place their faith in Christ, so that they may then respond to the Gospel in belief and be born again. It makes no sense, and, for purposes of our discussion in Isaiah 55:1, it destroys the meaning of all who thirst to come and eat and drink without money and without cost.

Many people want to say the water is a reference to the Holy Spirit, but I think that is a suspect inference in this verse. Jesus indeed referred to the water as a representation of the Holy Spirit, but that was not to be operative until after His resurrection (John 7:37-39); therefore, that is not applicable here in Isaiah. If water refers to the Holy Spirit, then no Old Testament Israelite could be saved because the Holy Spirit was not given as a permanent, indwelling presence until after Christ Jesus was resurrected. The reference to food and drink here seems more likely to be referring to eternal life which is available in every dispensation. Both the living water (John 4:10-11, 12-13), and the bread of life (John 6:27, 32-33, 35) are references to eternal life. Justification salvation is the point to the metaphor being employed here. In Isaiah 44:3, the pouring out of water is compared to the pouring out of God's Spirit in the Messianic Kingdom, but that is not a direct identification of water and Spirit.

Some people believe the meaning is referring to the blessings that will be available in the Messianic Kingdom. Those blessings, however, will be readily available to everyone in the Kingdom. They will not have to be told to come and buy without money and without cost. This is all more in line with a call to come to faith. Of course, all those who come to faith will enjoy the Messianic Kingdom blessings, but I do not believe that is the subject here. The faith and the "everlasting covenant" (v. 3) are the subjects.

There are some non-literal, or simply mistaken, interpretations of these verses that are far from being correct. "Hitzig and Knobel understand by water, wine, and milk, the rich material blessings which awaited the exiles on their return to their fatherland, whereas they were now paying tribute and performing service in Babylon without receiving anything in return" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 7, 7:532]. It is false to say that the Israelites had "rich material blessings" back in Israel after their return, and it is false to say that life was essentially slavery in Babylon. Others think the references to hunger and thirst refer to the Babylonian captives. The problem with all of this thinking is that the Israelites in Babylon did not lack those things. In fact, we know that they had a life in Babylon that was so good that most of them stayed once Cyrus issued the decree that allowed them to return to Jerusalem. Other theologians acknowledge that point, but use it to say that the people must abandon the comfortable life of material advantage in Babylon to return to a less materially comfortable, but spiritually advantageous, life back in Israel. Reading Ezra and Nehemiah, however, is proof that life back in Israel was not exactly spiritually vibrant either. Either way, this verse has nothing to do with the Babylonian captivity; it is a call to mankind to be saved.

"The Aramaic Targum understands the 'thirsty' to be those who want to learn and Ibn Ezra interprets the water as the Torah, while some of the Church Fathers saw this as an invitation to be baptized in water" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 496, n. 541]. Salvation by means of faith is not on the radar for Rabbinic Judaism, but knowledge of the Mosaic Law is; therefore, it is no surprise that they interpret this verse in that way. The fact that the church fathers saw water baptism in this verse is no surprise either. It was not long after John's death that salvific efficacy began to be attached to water baptism and literal hermeneutics went away rather quickly as well which is why this verse was figuratively applied to baptism. These doctrines obviously do not comport with any literal reading of the Scripture. We have to remember that figures of speech still have a literal interpretation; we cannot make them mean whatever we want them to mean. In this metaphor, the things used to maintain and enhance physical life are figuratively applied to truth that relates to spiritual life.

Thirst must relate to the state of mind that one develops when the realization sets in that one needs the food and the drink that are the things of eternal life. The lack of money involved in the transaction that acquires food and drink suggests that no one can purchase what one is hungering and thirsting after, and, in fact, they are free for the taking, but they must be taken and received.

What has been done in the past has not worked for anyone, Jew or Gentile. They have spent their wealth on what is not bread, that is, on what is not spiritually beneficial, and their hard work has gone to purchase things that cannot satisfy because only godly

spiritual matters are ultimately satisfying. In the end, people remain in spiritual poverty, even though they may be materially wealthy, or poor, depending on their station in life, but either way they end up with nothing worthwhile. Those who answer the call to receive the spiritual things that do not cost them money end up with real bread and with what does satisfy.

Wages, *תְּשׁוּבָה*, means labor and toil referring to heavy physical work as the expenditure of energy. It may refer to the fruit of one's labor, wages. Here, it refers to wages that are spent unwisely and therefore in vain getting nothing of value in return for the expenditure. It may be translated either one in this verse, but wages seem to fit the context better. The NET Bible translates it "hard-earned money" which is a very good translation because it incorporates the concepts of both labor and wages.

Satisfy, *שָׂבַע*, means abundance and satisfaction. The word is negated here meaning that the material things that money purchases are not satisfying. This is set in contrast to that which is good to eat, i.e., spiritual food.

The question is asked of them for the purpose of getting them to think about why they are wasting their money on that which ultimately cannot satisfy. They are commanded to listen to Him. Listen, *שָׁמַע*, means to use the perception of hearing with the ears to process information. The sense is to listen, hear, or pay close attention to, and usually to respond in conformity. Here, the first use of the word is a command, and the word is used twice for emphasis. That is why the NASB uses "listen carefully" to translate these two words together. "The infinitive absolute *after the verb*, sometimes to intensify the idea of the verb especially after imperatives" [Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec # 113r, 343]. Literally, it can read, "Listen! [command] Listen carefully [emphasis] ...". The NIV has the most accurate literal translation, "Listen, listen ...". Many translations use "Hearken diligently..." (KJV, LSV, YLT, ASV, ESV), which probably expresses the emphasis that is present in the use of these words better than "carefully" emphasizes the command. They are to specifically listen to "Me," the speaker here, and no one else; they are to obey what they heard, and the result will be good for them.

"Eat" is also a command, but they are commanded to eat what is good which is in contrast that which is not bread and therefore cannot satisfy. Good, *טוֹב*, means that which is good, well-pleasing, valuable, or useful. The material enticements the world has to offer are built on a system of sin and rebellion against God, but the food and drink that God freely offers produces freedom, joy, peace and numerous other spiritual benefits that the world system can never match.

I suppose the question needs to be asked, why would anyone spend their hard-earned money on what is not bread and on what does not satisfy? The answer is quite simple: people are spiritually dead which means they are separated, alienated from God. They can do nothing but exist in the realm of what does not, and cannot, satisfy. The answer to this is that they must answer the call of God and obtain from Him what He has for them that is without cost; it requires no labor and no money to acquire. It is not for sale; it is for the taking. Grace is very evident in this situation. "And as buying without money or any other medium of exchange is an idea which neutralizes itself in the sphere of natural objects, wine and milk are here blessings and gifts of divine grace, which are obtained by

grace, their reception being dependent upon nothing but a sense of need, and a readiness to accept the blessings offered" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 7, 7:532].

In the end, those who respond to the call of God will delight in abundance.

Delight, *נָפַח*, means to be delicate, to take delight. In this context, it means to take delight, to enjoy referring to taking pleasure and enjoyment in an object, implying the desirability of the object. The object is God. This verb form is intensive. The spiritual benefits of answering God's all are intense, and the physical benefits in terms of covenant fulfillment in the Messianic Kingdom will also be incredible.

Abundance, *דָּשָׁן*, means fatness, the choice produce referring to what is produced and choice for consumption. "It indicates the spiritual blessings of God as abundance (NASB), fatness (KJV), richest of food or fare (NIV) freely bestowed on His people who will respond" [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "דָּשָׁן," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 250].

"God promises that your soul 'will delight' in God's abundance and riches. At this point the imagery of eating food begins to fade away, and the spiritual reality of what the prophet was talking about begins to become clearer" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 497].

The verb translated "delight" is reflexive which could lead to the NASB translation "delight yourself." Other people have "delight your soul" because the word *נַפְשׁ*, sometimes defined as "soul," is also in the text. The problem with translating this as "soul," is that the word "seldom denotes a 'soul' in any full sense. Initially, it means the literal breath of both animals and humans. Since breath is tantamount to life itself, *nepeš* essentially means 'life' ..." [Willem A. VanGemeren, s.v. "נַפְשׁ," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament & Exegesis*, 3:133]. It generally means breath or life. A literal translation could be, "And delight yourself, your life in abundance." No English translation reads that way; they are either "soul" or "yourself," but I think that using the word "life" is in keeping both with the context and the meaning of the word. "Although we have no evidence to think that the Hebrews thought of 'the soul' as a separate entity, when they use the word they are talking about the particular reality of life, whether it be translated 'self,' 'being,' or 'person.' It is not the 'flesh' or the 'heart' or the 'spirit.' In some ways it is the sum of all these. Thus when the prophet says that the one who listens to what he says should *let your soul delight itself in fatness*, he is saying that the whole person, instead of being chaff in the wind, will be a tree planted by the waters (Ps. 1), if only he will 'seek the Lord' (v. 6)" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 437].

Isaiah 55:3<sup>3</sup> "Incline [נָטָה] your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live [חַיָּה]; And I will make [כָּרַת] an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David.

Four more commands are issued in this verse: incline, come, listen, and live. The command to listen is once again prominent. Perhaps we should be getting the idea that listening to what God has to say is very important, even eternally important.

Incline, *נָטַף*, in this context, means to pay attention. The sense of the word is to bend or turn one's ear towards a speaker in order to listen well.

If they incline their ear, meaning if they earnestly want to listen, they have the opportunity to come to Him and live. The word *וַיִּחְיֶה* is also in this clause and most English translations use the word "soul." Literally, this clause reads, "Listen and live that your soul [life or individual self]," which we smooth out in English to read, "Listen that your soul will live."

Live, *וַיִּחְיֶה*, means to live, to be alive. It may also mean to come to life or to revive from death. The TANAKH reads, "Hearken, and you shall be revived." Since we are talking about moving from a state of spiritual death to a state of eternal life, this seems to be a good translation that fits the context very well. The grammar, a conjunction (translated "that") following the imperfect verb functions to express purpose/results. The only way they may live is to partake of the drink and the food, which is spiritual sustenance in this context, which will grant them life.

Just as God made an everlasting covenant with King David, completely based on the will and the grace of God, so He will enter into an everlasting covenant with individual believing Israelites. This has to be a reference to Israel, because God did not enter into a covenant relationship with either the church or with individual Gentile believers. The covenants are with Israel. I think this confirms my thoughts that this Scripture is dealing with justification salvation for both the Israelites and Gentiles, who are the primary audience. I think that it is unclear whether the New Covenant or the Davidic Covenant is the covenant in question. Some theologians suggest that elements of both covenants are present. The New Covenant, which pertains to justification salvation for the Israelites, is part of the context, but this chapter is primarily concerned with Gentiles. King David is in the immediate context of this verse, and both Jew and Gentile will be under His authority during the Messianic Kingdom. I believe the immediate context is determinative and the Davidic Covenant is the subject. Constable is the only theologian that I know of that believes it is a reference to the New Covenant, although he concedes that it could instead be a reference to the Davidic Covenant. Verse 4 suggests that the Davidic Covenant is the subject as well.

This probably should read "covenant for you" (cf. YLT; LSV) rather than "covenant with you." That makes sense given the fact that God did not make any covenants with Gentiles; He made them with Israel. Furthermore, God is the one who initiated those covenants and they are all, with the lone exception of the Mosaic Covenant, unconditional and depend only on God for their fulfillment. "The formula *karat b'erit le* means 'to inaugurate a covenant in favor of', to bring a person into the benefits that the covenant pledges" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 344]. Young thought that it should "be construed as an ethical dative of advantage, *for your benefit*" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:377].



The word make, *קָרַת*, means to cut and to make a covenant. This relates to the practice of cutting sacrificial animals in half as part of the ratification process involved with entering into a covenant (cf. Gen. 15:9-10), hence, making a covenant with someone was referred to as cutting a covenant. Just as in Genesis 15 when Yahweh ratified the Abrahamic Covenant by Himself which obligated only Him to fulfill the covenant stipulations, in the same way He enters into this everlasting covenant promising to fulfill it Himself by imparting life when anyone answers the call to listen, come, and live. As Genesis 15 revealed, this is a faith transaction that is not considered to be a work (cf. Rom. 4:1-8).

We could discuss for quite some time whether or not this covenant is the New Covenant or the Davidic Covenant or something else, but that is almost beside the point. We know that the Abrahamic Covenant and the amplifying Land, Davidic, and New Covenants will all be fulfilled when these events take place in the future and the Kingdom begins. We also know that in the meantime, individual persons, Jew and Gentile, can respond to God's call and partake of the spiritual food and drink that He is offering. We know that these references to David must be pointing to the Davidic Covenant, but it cannot be divorced from the Abrahamic Covenant due to its nature as an amplification of the seed element of that foundational covenant.

The reference to David here must be the Messiah who is of Davidic descent, the one exhibiting the "lovingkindness of David, the One who is faithful" who has made possible this life promised to people that flows from listening to and answering the call to partake of the Lord's food and drink. His sacrificial death and resurrection, expressions of His loyal love and faithful obedience to do God's will, make possible this everlasting covenant. The Messianic Kingdom is the context, and the Messiah King will rule over it in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. In Acts 13:34, this verse is applied directly to Christ to whom the promises made to David have been given. The thinking then is this: "The covenant is 'everlasting' because it is based on the 'sure' mercies, that is, it is 'made firm' by the Messiah's atoning sacrifice, and therefore irrevocably unailing, guaranteeing an eternal unforfeitable [sic] salvation to the believer" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1304].

This clause in this verse is very confusing to me. Most translations read "the sure mercies of David" (KJV), "the promises assured to David" (CSB) or something similar. Certainly, the promises made in the Davidic Covenant are completely fulfilled in the Messiah, which is the point that Paul made in Acts 13:34, and that seems to be the point being made here as well.

Isaiah 55:4 <sup>4</sup>"Behold, I have made [בָּנִי] him a witness [עֵד] to the peoples [לְאֻמִּים], A leader [מְנַדֵּד] and commander [צֹנֵה] for the peoples.

Three characteristics are used here to describe the Davidic King: witness, leader, and commander. These things are all related to the relationship the King will have with "the peoples." This is another revelation in the book of Isaiah concerning Gentile salvation, although it does not necessarily neglect the Israelites either. The difference is that under the conditions of the New Covenant, all the Jews born in the Kingdom will be believers because "they will all know Me" (Jer. 31:34) referring to the people of Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31).

Verses 4 and 5 both begin with behold, הִנֵּה which serves to bring attention to them. Both refer to the Messiah, although some think that verse 4 is only a reference to the historical King David.

Made, נָתַן, means to give, put, set. God gave or appointed Him, the Messiah King David, to be all these things to the people. "Given Him" is a better translation than "made Him."

Witness, עֵד, means a witness or testimony. God Himself may serve as a witness. In this context, it would be fair to say that the Davidic King is a testimony to the peoples of the Kingdom, which is the people of the world, of God's faithfulness: His faithfulness to keep His Word, His faithfulness to Israel, His faithfulness to the Church, and His faithfulness to fulfill the covenants.

Leader, נָגִיד, means a leader, ruler, prince referring to one of official status for governing and leading. The Davidic King is the epitome of what it means to be a leader. "It is perhaps in this derivative that the idea of prominence, which is the root, comes to fullest expression. The word ... is applied to leaders in several fields—governmental, military and religious. The word is usually singular and refers to the man at the top, the king, the high priest, etc." [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "נָגִיד," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 549-550]. This word can also mean "commander." Possibly, this word is a reference to the title, while the word translated "commander" in our English translations is a reference to the work ordered by the commander. In Daniel 9:5, the word נָגִיד is translated "Prince" in "Messiah the Prince."

Commander, צָוָה, means to lay charge, to give charge, to command referring to commanding, telling, instructing, giving direction, or decreeing by stating with force and authority what others must do. God is the ultimate commander, and here in Isaiah, it is the Messiah King, the Son of David, who commands the peoples.

Peoples, לְאֻמִּים, means people and it may refer to Israel or to mankind. In this context, it refers to both. "The Semitic root suggests that the meaning of the word is togetherness, i.e., the common people considered as a whole.... the thrust of the term remains: all people in their definable groups. This clearly suggests the unity and diversity of humanity" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "לְאֻמִּים," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 465-466]. This is a great picture of the Messianic Kingdom. A righteous King ruling over the whole world which is living in harmony among the various people groups inhabiting the world at that time.

The nations are going to flock to the King in response to His presence in Zion and to the efforts of the Kingdom Israelites who will finally be the "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" Israel was created to be (Ex. 19:6).

Isaiah 55:5 <sup>5</sup>"Behold, you will call [קְרִיאָה] a nation you do not know, And a nation which knows you not will run to you, Because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you."

Some theologians think that this called nation is the Church (cf. Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 430), but that is not possible. In the Kingdom, the Church

is ruling and reigning with the King, her Husband, and no new members are being added to the Bride of Christ. You cannot add people to the Bride of Christ after the wedding ceremony is over and the Wedding Banquet has begun. These are believers to be sure, but they are not part of the Church. They are like Old Testament believers and Tribulation saints, but they are Kingdom saints and none of these people are part of the Church. Others think Israel is the subject.

The nations of the Messianic Kingdom will be populated by people who need to learn about the Lord (except the Israelites who will all know Him, Jer. 31:34), and they will travel to Zion to learn His ways (Is. 2:3).

“You” could be a reference to Israel or to the Davidic King or, most likely, to both. Israel, under the leadership of the King, will be a nation of evangelists serving the King. “The LORD addresses ideal Israel in Kingdom blessing as restored to Him and thus identified with Him” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1304]. Others believe this is a reference to the Davidic King. “The Lord’s Servant-Messiah is addressed directly where God tells Him that He will have command over a nation that He does not know because the Lord has glorified Him. When the Servant-Messiah takes His throne, He will not only rule Israel but the Gentile nations as well” [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1093].

Call, קָרָא, means to cry out, to call, to call together, to summon referring to calling or summoning a person to come into one’s presence or give a task. It is not possible that the King does not “know” any nation in the world; He knows all of them. At the beginning of the Kingdom all the people of the nations will be saved, but as time goes on their descendants will need to respond to the King’s call. The call is for the people of the nations to respond to Him, to learn from Him, and to be saved by Him. “Presumably, this will be a friendly call, an invitation to come, an offer to eat freely of God’s spiritual food, and an exhortation to establish a relationship with God. Their running to him implies their acceptance of him and the establishment of a relationship, which agrees with the role of the servant in 49:1, 6, 8” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 504-505].

This verse is a testimony to the work of Israel, serving their King and doing His will, in calling the nations to the Savior King (my term) during the Messianic Kingdom as Israel finally fulfills her divinely assigned purpose (Ex. 19:6). It is also a revelation of those nations’ desire to know the Savior King.

At some point in time, the world is going to know the power and the glory of God. That glory will be shown to the world in the Person of the Davidic King, and people will respond to Him. Israel’s prominence in the world is highlighted by the fact that Yahweh is being referred to as “the Holy One of Israel.” God’s glory will be reflected by Israel to the world during the King’s reign over not only Israel, but the world.