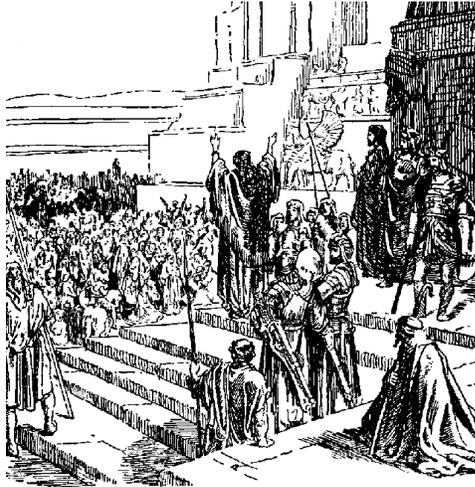




# Part 12: Father God, Mother Zion

Word ALIVE



## Background Notes ▾

**PURPOSE:** To tell the prophecies of Third Isaiah, spoken during the restoration of Judah under Ezra and Nehemiah, inviting all people to God and his forgiveness.

**AUTHOR:** The book of the prophet Isaiah spans the period starting just before the Assyrian exile, continues with the Babylonian exile (possibly a disciple known as Second Isaiah), concluding with the “Book of Consolation”, the writings of a third author teaching in Isaiah’s name.

**DATE:** Cyrus allowed the return of the Judeans in 538 BC.

**STYLE:** The minor prophets all repeat many of the themes found in the major prophets, and add specific details describing Jesus’ birthplace and specific events of his life recorded in the Gospels. Third Isaiah specifically focuses on God’s gratuitous forgiveness and the formation of his family which encompasses all peoples.



## Opening Quotes ▾

📖 “Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk... Seek the Lord while he may be found, call to him while he is near.” Is 55:1

📖 “Says the Lord, ‘As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways.’” Is 55:8

📖 “So shall be my word that goes from my mouth; It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.” Is 55:11

📖 “The foreigners who join themselves to the Lord ... their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar.” Is 56:6

📖 “He shall come to Zion a redeemer, to those of Jacob who turn from sin.” Is 59:20

📖 “For Zion’s sake I will not be silent until her vindication shines forth like the dawn. You shall be called by a new name.” Is 62:1

📖 “As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you.” Is 62:5

📖 “Say to daughter Zion, your savior comes!” Is 62:11

📖 “You have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt. Yet, O Lord, you are our father; we are the clay and you are the potter.” Is 64:6

📖 “As a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you.” Is 66:13

📖 BIG PICTURE		🔗 : LAW, History, Writings, Prophets		🔗 : key covenants in our Father’s plan	
	The 12 Periods ▾	The Plot ▾	Other books for the same period ▾	📖 stories in each period ▾	
BC	THE BEGINNINGS	GN 1-11	Ps 8, 104	Creation, Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah’s ark, Tower of Babel	
1850	THE PATRIARCHS	GN 12-50		Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Melchizedek	
1250	EXODUS FROM EGYPT	EX		Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, passover, exodus	
1200	JOURNEY TO CANAAN	NM, Jos	LV, DT	Sinai desert, 10 commandments, Levites, Law, Joshua	
1100	THE JUDGE CYCLE	Jg	Ruth	12 tribes, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel	
1030	KINGS & PROPHETS	1 & 2 S	1 Ch, Ps, Prov	Saul, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, the Temple	
1000	THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	1 Kg	2 Ch, Prov, Ecc, Songs	Israel (N), Judah (S), Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Assyrian exile	
721 587	BABYLONIAN EXILE	2 Kg	2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar	Babylonians, “major” prophets, Isaiah (to Israel), Jeremiah (to Jerusalem), Ezekiel (to the Exiles)	
538	THE RESTORATION	Ezr, Neh	Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job	Cyrus, 2 <sup>nd</sup> temple, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Law, “minor” prophets, new writings	
163 63	THE REPURIFICATION	1 Mac	Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom	Greeks, Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean Dynasty, Romans, Jewish sects (Pharisees, Saducees, Zealots, Essenes)	
AD	JESUS CHRIST	LK	MT, MK, JN	Incarnation, Good News, New Law, Cross & Resurrection	
33 70	APOSTOLIC CHURCH	Acts	Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv	Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ	

## The Story of Part 12: Father God, Mother Zion



The time is the Restoration of Judah. Nehemiah has just led the campaign to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem, and the Levite scribe Ezra publicly read the Law of Moses in the newly refurbished temple. Now the prophet known as Third Isaiah would wrap up the “Book of Consolation” with these prophecies.

The promise that God had given to David was to be definitively sealed by a banquet to which we are *gratuitously* invited. Now was the time to turn to the Lord, who was being so generous in forgiving. He was going to forget the past. This sort of instant forgiveness was not something easily understood, since God is also the God of justice, rewarding and punishing each according to their deeds. But his ways are above our ways. God was going to “send out his word, and it would accomplish its purpose and not return empty!”

Third Isaiah then said that perhaps the rich man would soon learn that the more things he had, the less satisfied he became. Perhaps it was the poor man who would listen more to his prophecies, more likely to value things that were given freely, like friendship, or hope. As for accountability for past sins, all of our debts would be written off! This was the time for all-out forgiveness, free of charge!

But this was not the only thing that the people would have a hard time understanding. God also wanted a people that rejects barriers. *All* peoples willing to follow his ways were invited into God’s kingdom, not just the Jews. This was not a new theme, but it was being emphasized now at a time of restoration, the formation of modern Judaism, a time when foreign marriages were dissolved for the sake of keeping God’s people pure. In spite of this, Third Isaiah opened wide the Temple doors to foreigners. God’s gratuitous invitation was literally an open house, not just for the former Israelites and Judeans. Salvation was at hand, God’s justice was about to be revealed, and His house would be called a house of prayer for all.

So, if you want your own wounds to be quickly healed, exhorted Third Isaiah, then share your bread with the hungry, and clothe the naked. If you do so and then cry to God for help, he will respond: Here I am! In this way, God was teaching his peoples that the way to his gratuitous mercy, forgiveness and compassion, was by showing the same to others, even to foreigners.

Third Isaiah said that the Spirit of the Lord, though gentle as a dove, was also like a tumultuous flood, which would ensure the perpetuity of the covenant given to David. God would come to Zion (another name for Jerusalem) as the redeemer to the people of Jacob who turned from their sins.

The prophets had a knack for combining the spirit of the law with the letter of the law. Filled with fervor for the Laws of Moses, they also exhorted the people to an interior disposition without which the rituals of the Law

would be completely meaningless, even insulting, to God.

The time was coming for a new covenant to fulfill the one made to Moses, and to David. Like some of the other prophets before him, Third Isaiah called Jerusalem the Lord’s bride. The Jewish people needed to know that they were loved by God. After such a troublesome history of attaining and then embarrassingly losing their promised land, they would no longer be called “Desolate” or “Forsaken” by the other nations, but instead “the delight of the Lord!” Just as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so would God rejoice in the people, symbolized by their great city of Jerusalem, the “City of David” or “City of God,” now referred to as “Daughter Zion.” “You, Lord,” said Third Isaiah, “are our father, our redeemer.”

But the reality of their past came back to haunt them. Even though they got back their land, their city, and their temple, they began to seriously question their troubled past, and the hard questions inevitably came. Why? Why did they lose the land promised to them in the first place? Why would God himself allow this to happen to the people whom he called? Was this whole restoration thing a mirage, a setup for yet another failure? Feeling their accountability, Third Isaiah voiced the deepest thoughts of the people, asking God, “Why do you harden our hearts and let us not follow your ways?”

But if one thing characterized (and still characterizes) the Jews, it was their stubborn hope. Planted in their hearts by God, verbalized through the prophets, they were assured by God that “as a mother comforts her son, so will I comfort you.”

And so the restoration would give way to serious reflection, resulting in wisdom writings and religious histories, which together with the Laws of Moses and the writings of the prophets, give us today the witness of God’s hand in history known as the Old Testament.

Let us sum up the span of the Old Testament prophets. The minor prophets (called “minor” because their writings are shorter) had prophesied with the “major” prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The prophets spoke before, during, and after the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, and during the restoration under the Persians. After the restoration there would be no more prophets until the “voice crying in the wilderness” would appear, as prophesied by Malachi, the last prophet in the Old Testament.

Before entering the New Testament, let us take a moment’s pause and look at this period of reflection, finish off the Old Testament history with a new Jewish nation (called “Israel” again), and set the stage for the fulfillment of all the prophecies in one man.



## Defending the Faith: Is God a “He”?

“God is not a ‘He.’ This is the projection of a male-dominated society onto God, resulting in the male chauvinism of the Catholic Church, calling God a father and refusing to ordain women as priests.”

Just last week “former Catholic” Renee Cox posed topless as a female Jesus in a controversial piece of “art” on display at the Brooklyn Museum (the same museum which a year ago displayed the Virgin Mary decorated by elephant dung and pornographic material). “Why can’t a woman be Christ?” asked Cox, “We are the givers of life!” While most feminists are not as crude and disrespectful as Cox, her question can be answered simply: “A woman cannot be Christ because Christ already came, and he was a he.” Isaiah 66:13 and Matthew 23:37 also reveal that God has motherly characteristics as well, but God has revealed himself *primarily* as “Father”.

Since male-dominated societies also worshipped goddesses, it does not suffice to explain away the male image of God as a product of a male-dominated society. We call God “He” not because *we* said so, but because *He* said so.

For the same reason, God is not the *impersonal* “Supreme Being” of the eastern religions or of freemasonry. He is “I AM,” the God who revealed himself to the patriarchs (Ex 3:6), spoke through the prophets (Lk 1:70), and revealed himself ultimately in his only begotten Son (Heb 1:1). To describe God in feminine or impersonal terms is simply not to describe the God of history. This is why it is *less* accurate to call God the androgynous “Father/Mother” or any other term that makes it harder to relate to God on a *personal* level. God has revealed himself in no uncertain terms as our “Lord”, “King”, and “Father.”

As for revealing his motherly qualities, as his prerogative, God chose not another title, but a real woman! Strange as it may seem, it is by his bidding, not ours, that a woman is given such a unique role. The expression “I see God in that person” could not be truer of anyone than it is of Mary, who literally had God inside her! No religion can exalt a woman more than the Catholic Church unless they falsely worship a goddess. It is easy to feel, but difficult to explain, the love we feel for our Mother in Christ to people who cannot seem to accept that we do not worship her like a goddess. Isn’t it ironic that the Church accused of male chauvinism in its male priesthood is also accused of worshipping a woman?

As for the all-male priesthood, the reason reiterated by the Pope is the same reason we call God “Father”: because he said so. In the Bible, God chose female patriarchs (matriarchs), judges, queens, prophets, and even deacons, but only male apostles. Had he appointed female apostles, we would likely have female priests. The office of male deacon was brought back as recently as Vatican II, and the same could happen with female deacons or married clergy in the future if the need arose. But the authority to do so can only come from the Church the priesthood pertains to. We do not judge female ministers who break no commandment of their Churches. But to complain that all Catholic priests are men is like complaining that all Catholic nuns are women! Each plays a *God-given* role in the Body of Christ.



## Expressing the Faith: Seek the Lord

Written by Third Isaiah and Roc O’Connor, SJ. It is the open call to God’s forgiveness.

***Seek the Lord while He may be found.  
Call to Him while He is still near.***

*Today is the day and now the proper hour  
To forsake our sinful lives and turn to the Lord.  
(Chorus)*

*As high as the sky is above the earth  
So high above our ways, the ways of the Lord.  
(Chorus)*

*Finding the Lord, let us cling to him.  
His words, his ways, lead us to life.  
(Chorus)*

➤ **Next time: “The Meaning of Life”** ↵