

Isaiah Series Part 18

“Why is God not enough?”

Isaiah Chapter 43



Introduction

All throughout the writings of **Isaiah**, the Lord confronts a troubling drift among His people. Israel has not formally abandoned Yahweh, but they have **supplemented Him**—turning toward pagan practices to gain information, power, protection, and advantage. They seek insight from the nations, from omens, from fate (astrology), from anything that promises control in an uncertain world.

The deeper question Isaiah forces us to ask is not *what* they were turning to, but *why*:
Why was God not enough?

We will look at how Isaiah is a staircase to the New Testament Messianic Birth Narrative:

1. Isaiah 43:23-24 – Israel's neglected worship
2. Isaiah 60:6 – the nation's move toward true worship
3. Matthew 2:1-12 – Magi's proper worship

Set the Scene – (42:18-25)

A. God's Righteousness and Israel's Failure (Isaiah 42:21–22)

God's intent: to magnify His law (v.21)

The Torah was meant to reveal God's glory through Israel
Motyer: God's law was never the problem; Israel's response was.

The tragic outcome: plundered and trapped (v.22)

Imagery of captivity, vulnerability, and humiliation
Oswalt: This describes exile as covenant consequence, not accident

Teaching emphasis:

Israel's suffering is not random misfortune but **relational discipline**.

Set the Scene – (42:18-25)

The Necessary Tension Before Grace

A. Isaiah 42:18–25 leaves Israel exposed

Blind, deaf, plundered, burned

No appeal to merit, obedience, or insight remains

B. The text creates expectancy

If salvation comes, it must come **from God alone**

This prepares the reader for the dramatic shift ahead

I. The Lord Who Redeems and Names His People (Isaiah 43:1–7)

A. “But now...” — A decisive word of grace (v.1)

Marks a sharp contrast with judgment language in Isaiah 42

Oswalt: God’s redemptive word interrupts despair, not because Israel has changed, but because God is faithful to Himself

Motyer: “But now” signals covenant renewal grounded in divine initiative

I. The Lord Who Redeems and Names His People (Isaiah 43:1–7)

B. Creation, redemption, and belonging

“He who created you... formed you... redeemed you”

Redemption is grounded in creation theology

Naming = ownership, relationship, and intimacy (“You are mine”)

I. The Lord Who Redeems and Names His People (Isaiah 43:1–7)

C. God's presence through threatening waters and fires (vv.2–3)

Echoes the Exodus and wilderness traditions

Also Jesus' statement – John 16:33

Oswalt: These are not promises of exemption from suffering, but of divine accompaniment

Motyer: The language portrays controlled chaos—threats that cannot overwhelm God's people

I. The Lord Who Redeems and Names His People (Isaiah 43:1–7)

D. God's love and the ingathering of His people (vv.4–7)

“You are precious in my eyes” — covenant affection

Universal scope: from east and west, north and south

Purpose clause: “everyone... whom I created for my glory”

II. The Lord Alone Is God and Savior (Isaiah 43:8–13)

A. The courtroom scene: blind witnesses (vv.8–9)

Nations and idols summoned for testimony

Irony: those who claim sight are blind

II. The Lord Alone Is God and Savior (Isaiah 43:8–13)

B. Israel as God's chosen witness (vv.10–12)

Central affirmation: “Before me no god was formed...”

Oswalt: Israel's vocation is missional—bearing witness to the uniqueness of Yahweh

Motyer: Knowledge of God (“that you may know and believe”) is relational, not abstract

II. The Lord Alone Is God and Savior (Isaiah 43:8–13)

C. Divine sovereignty and finality (v.13)

“From eternity I am He”

No rival power can undo God’s saving work

III. The Lord Who Makes a Way: A New Exodus (Isaiah 43:14–21)

A. Judgment on Babylon and false powers (vv.14–17)

Babylon portrayed as proud yet doomed

Exodus imagery: chariots, horses, armies overthrown

III. The Lord Who Makes a Way: A New Exodus (Isaiah 43:14–21)

B. Forgetting the former things (v.18)

Not denial of history, but release from limiting expectations

Motyer: Israel must not confine God to past acts of salvation

III. The Lord Who Makes a Way: A New Exodus (Isaiah 43:14–21)

C. The “new thing” God is doing (vv.19–21)

Way in the wilderness; rivers in the desert

Cosmic participation: beasts honor the Lord

Oswalt: This is restoration that surpasses the first Exodus

IV. The Tragedy of Neglected Worship (Isaiah 43:22–28)

A. God's surprising complaint (vv.22–24)

Israel has not called upon the Lord

Worship reduced to burden-avoidance rather than love

Motyer: Religious minimalism replaces covenant devotion

IV. The Tragedy of Neglected Worship (Isaiah 43:22–28)

B. Grace before repentance (v.25)

“I, I am He who blots out your transgressions”

Forgiveness grounded in God's own sake, not Israel's merit

Oswalt: Grace precedes confession, inviting it

IV. The Tragedy of Neglected Worship (Isaiah 43:22–28)

C. Historical solidarity in sin and judgment (vv.26–28)

From ancestors to leaders, all stand guilty

Judgment is real, but not the final word

IV. The Tragedy of Neglected Worship (Isaiah 43:22–28)

Back to verses 23-24:

23 You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings,
 or honored me with your sacrifices.

 I have not burdened you with offerings,
 or wearied you with **frankincense**.

24 You have not bought me **sweet cane** with **money**,
 or satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices.

 But you have burdened me with your sins;
 you have wearied me with your iniquities.

V. The Nations Worship (Isaiah 60:6)

A multitude of **camels** shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring **gold** and **frankincense**,
and shall **bring good news**, the praises of the Lord.

The Magi:

Matthew 2:1-12

Gentiles do what Israel failed to do:

The Magi *come to worship* and bring **gold and frankincense (and myrrh)**—acts of honor and devotion.



VI. Key Insights (Matthew 2:1-12)

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? **For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.**”



VI. Key Insights (Matthew 2:1-12)

Then **Herod summoned the wise men secretly** and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

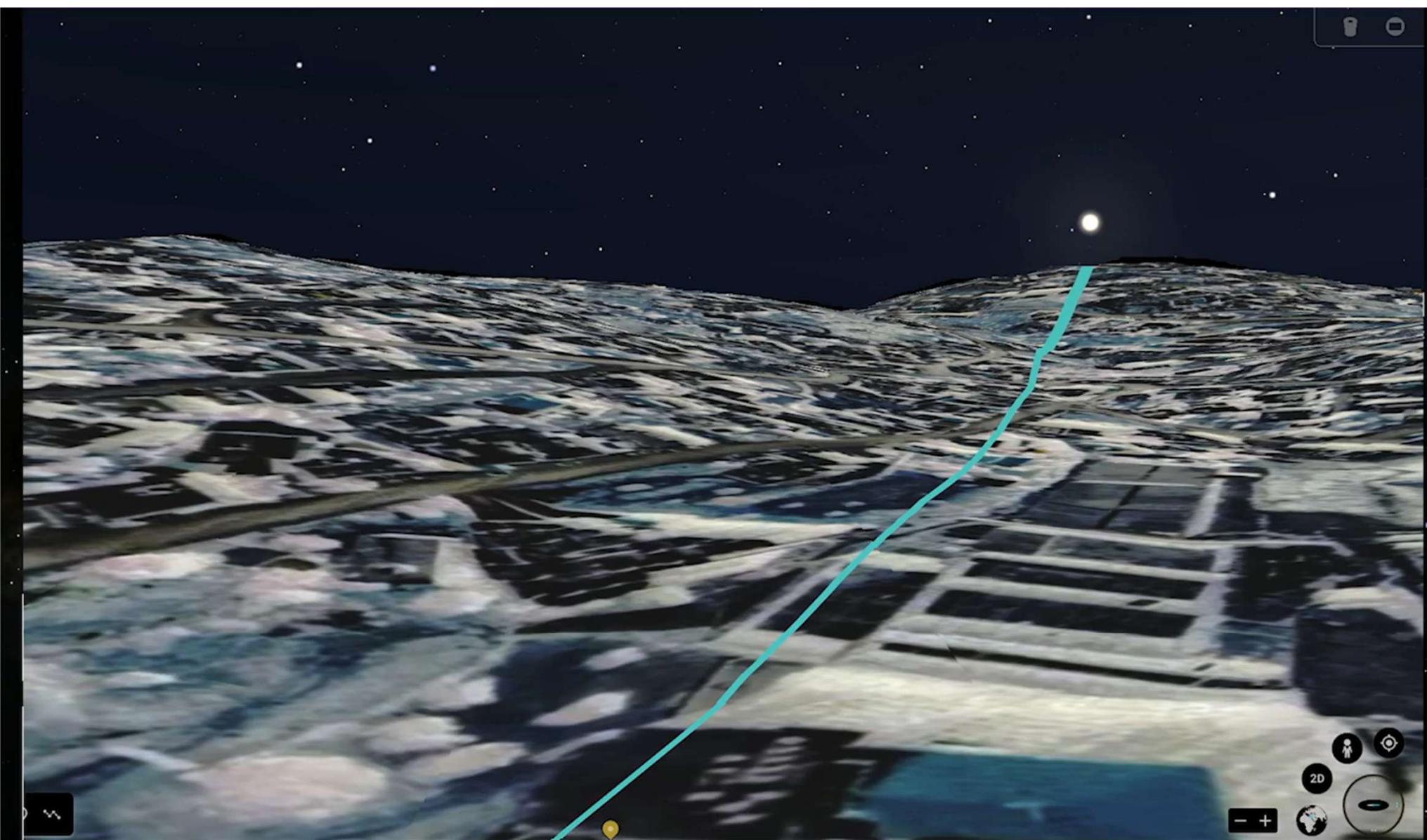
ion of Herod outside Jerusalem

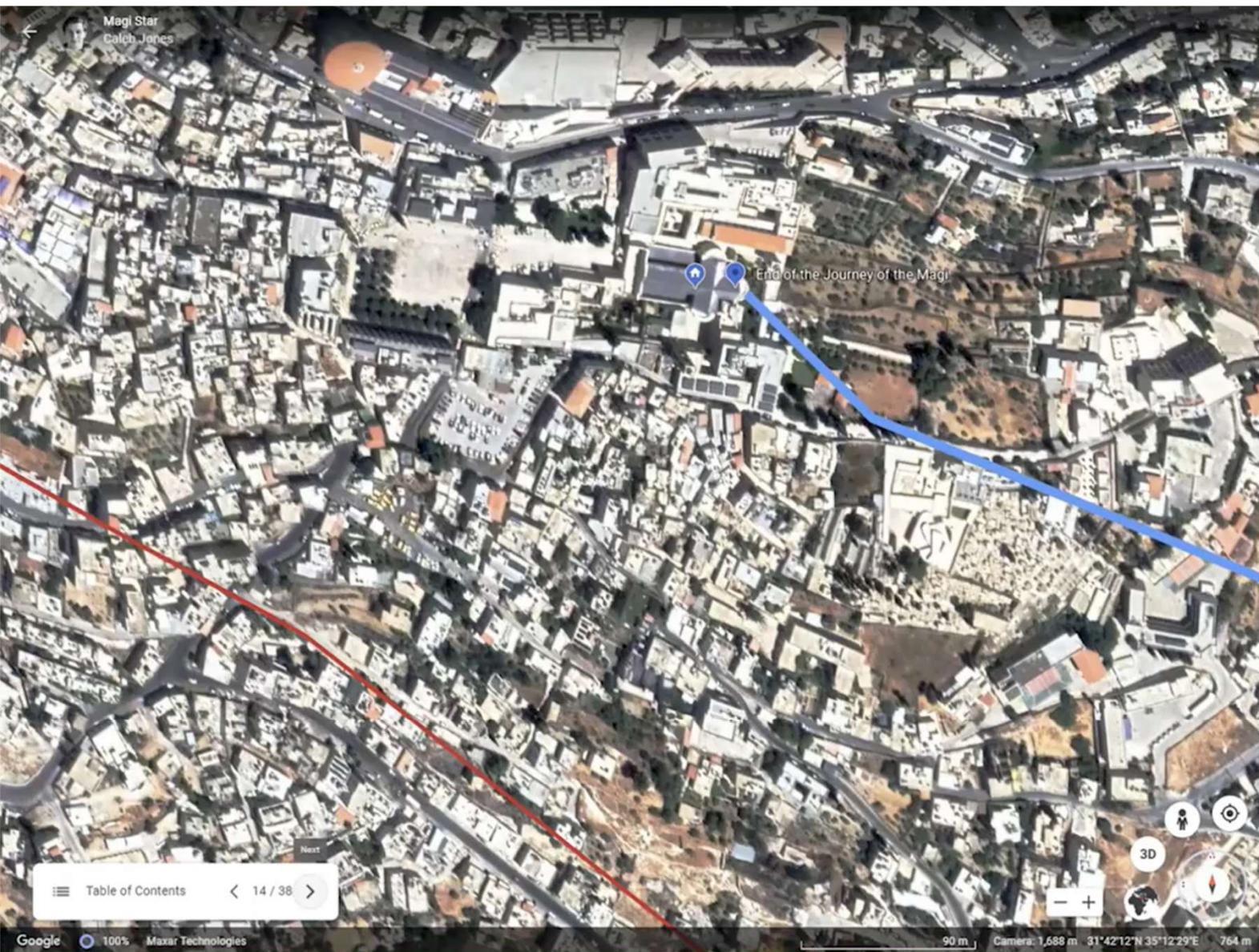
transmitted to eternity his family and he not neglect a memorial for himself, ress upon a mountain towards Arabia, from himself, Herodium . . . He also ces about the roots of the hill, sufficient furniture that was put into them, with his insomuch that, on account of its necessaries, the fortress might seem to y the bounds it had, a palace only.

ers of the Jews, Book I, Chapter 21, Part



Archeological site of Herodium, the palace of Herod





The Church of the Nativity

But strangely enough, this location leads the Magi to the location of the Church of the Nativity.

This is the traditional site of the home of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus Christ, dating to at least the 4th Century A.D. It is the oldest church in all of Israel, saved from Persian destruction by the iconography of the Persian Magi.

Conclusion

John Piper's famous statement, "**God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him,**" means that our deepest joy and satisfaction found *in* God, not from worldly things, demonstrates His worth and makes Him look most glorious to the world, especially in suffering, as our enjoyment points to His infinite goodness and fulfills the chief end of man: to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.