

Isaiah 48-56, Psalm 135

Isaiah 48 What God declares comes to pass: Israel will be freed from Babylon captivity by Cyrus

The Lord recognized that many of the exiles only possessed an outward form of religion, while others were outright idolaters and rebels. Throughout Israel's history the Lord had announced His actions beforehand so that His rebellious people would not attribute the events to false gods. Now He was announcing another major event in the nations' history. Though He had punished Israel for its rebellion, He would now bring glory to Himself by delivering it through Cyrus. Because of their disobedience, God's people had forfeited peace and blessing. The Lord was now offering them an opportunity to start over. If they responded in faith and left Babylon, He would care for their needs, as He had done during the wilderness wanderings following the exodus from Egypt. However, the Lord warned that the wicked would not participate in this new era of peace and blessing.

God wanted Israel to abandon their idol worship and once again love and serve Him. His desire is the same today, to turn to Him in difficult times. God won't share His glory with any other gods. He alone is eternal, creator, all-powerful, holy, the Redeemer of His people. What a great comfort to have God as our Lord. He is eternal, unchanging, and as mighty today as in the day of creation. He doesn't grow weak with time. He will give us strength for His purpose in our lives.

Isaiah 49 The Lord Cannot Forget His Own

These verses evidently apply to our Lord. Acts 13:47 says Jesus quoted Isaiah 49:6.

The assurance of not being forgotten were given to the Israel on the eve of their return from Babylon. They were timid and reluctant to quit the familiar scenes of their captivity; they dreaded the dangers and privations of their way home, and questioned whether the great empire of their captors would ever let them go or allow their city to rise from its ruins. Therefore, the Lord's voice takes on a tone of unusual persuasiveness.

He will lead them with a shepherd's care, Isa 49:10. He will make obstacles serve His purpose, Isa 49:11. His love is more than a mother's, Isa 49:15. He treasures the remembrance of His own, Isa 49:16. Zion thinks herself cast away as a derelict, but such is not the case. Even her broken walls are ever before God, with a view to their rebuilding, Isa 49:19. God's love is stronger than our strongest enemies, Isa 49:25, etc.

Let us hide in God's strength, standing above the fears that compose themselves in our soul. Let us ponder His assurances of compassion and comfort. His election of Israel is grounded only in His love for them. It cannot be further explained. He has the same love for us. Quit complaining, stop questioning, and start listening.

Isaiah 50 It Is Sin that Separates Israel from God

The Lord challenges the Israelites to prove their assertion by a certificate of divorce that they have been forsaken. He declares to them that the reason for their separation was their sin. He declared his confidence in God. He had not drawn back from the Lord's commission, despite severe opposition and humiliation. He persevered, confident that the Lord would one day vindicate him before his enemies. The chapter ends with an appeal for the servant's faithful followers to continue to trust the Lord and with a warning of judgment to those who reject the Lord's guidance.

From the first, Jesus knew that He must die. But He did not turn back. The Father who justified Him was always near. Let us who may be walking in darkness learn from our King to depend on Him.

Isaiah 51 Salvation Is Coming

The Lord speaks to His faithful people and reminds them of Abraham and the covenant. He assures them that the wilderness of Zion will become like Eden, like the garden of the Lord. Judgment will overtake the earth. It is beautiful to see how the faithful pray in faith after this message from God (Isa 51:9-11), and how God answers them (Isa 51:12-16).

Recall the loneliness of Abraham. Terah died, Lot dropped away, Hagar was thrown out, Isaac was laid on the altar, but the fire that burned in his heart only grew brighter. Don't despair if you are alone in your stand for God. One acorn, when touched by God, may become the parent to a forest. These exiled Jews hardly dared to hope that they could escape from their enemies. The forces of evil are strong, but God is stronger. The clouds threaten, but the sun is shining. Don't forget your Maker, your Redeemer, your Father! He cannot fail or forsake!

Isaiah 52 Salvation is coming! Fear not!

The last paragraph of chapter 51 gives the divine declaration that the suffering and affliction of Israel is to end. "Behold I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again" (Isa 51:22). Now Zion is called to wake up and put on beautiful garments. She is to arise from the dust. Such is the glorious future of Jerusalem. Isa 52:7-12 reveal the blessed results of the Coming of the Lord. Then it shall be said, "Thy God reigneth." Then and not before "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa 52:10).

Isa 52:7-12) describes the return of Jehovah to His people. It is announced by runners and watchmen, and results in an outburst of song. The prophet calls on the people to cleanse themselves; and finally announces that God will go before and behind them.

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Isaiah 53 The Suffering of the Messiah

This chapter gives us a more profound account of the crucifixion of Christ than is found elsewhere in the Bible. We see things not seen anywhere else. How do we know Chapter 53 is about Jesus? In John 12:38, John says Jesus fulfilled the words of Isaiah 53.

First, He suffered a rejected ministry, was despised, and His report message was not believed. Second, He suffered for us. It was the mystery in which He bore the sins of the people. Finally, His atoning death, in which He humbled Himself, and was "cut off out of the land of the living," although He was the sinless One who "had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth."

It ends with declaration of His ultimate triumph, as Jesus is seen passing from pain to prosperity, to triumph, to exaltation.

The New Testament fully bears witness to this great vision of the cross of Christ, the vicarious suffering of the Son of God and its blessed results. To reject them as meaning Christ and His work of atonement is equivalent to the rejection of the revelation of the New Testament and especially the rejection of the Person of our Lord. The chapter is one of the greatest in Isaiah.

Isaiah 54 Jerusalem's Glorious Future

With Israel's restoration assured by the servant's ministry, Jerusalem's future was bright. Comparing the ruined city to a barren woman, the Lord announced that she would be blessed with an abundance of children (a reference to her returning exiles). Placing her in the role of His divorced wife, He promised a

restoration of the marriage. Nothing would ever again separate them. The Lord would adorn the city with beauty and protect it from all assailants.

It must not be forgotten that this song of restoration follows immediately the description of the suffering and triumph of the Servant of God – Jesus. His thoughts are not the same as mine. The Holy Spirit convicts; We say we can't be forgiven. We think we have to earn grace. God says it is free. We find it hard to believe God loves us. Life is difficult without meaning, but God has a meaningful plan.

Isaiah 55 The Great Invitation to The Banquet

Using the imagery of an invitation to a banquet, the Lord urged His people to receive the blessings He offered. He desired to make an eternal covenant with the nation, which would parallel His covenant with David. Like David, Israel would be living testimony of God's greatness and would rule over nations. If Israel actively sought the Lord and turned from its wicked ways, He would compassionately forgive their sins. They could depend on this merciful response, for God's word of promise, is always realized. Just as rain does not reverse its course, but falls to the ground and makes the farmer's crops fruitful, so God does not take back His word of promise but rather brings it to fulfillment. The Lord would shower repentant Israel with abundant blessings, which would be an eternal sign of their renewed relationship.

God's abundant provision is described under several terms: waters, wine, milk, wholesome and satisfying bread, the good, fatness, Isa 55:1-2. We, too, are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, Eph 1:3.

Isaiah 56 Salvation Is for All

Our attention is not now about Christ, but about Israel. Chapter 56 shows that when this offer to receive God's blessings is at last accepted and the salvation experienced by Israel, it will mean similar blessing to the whole earth, including Gentiles and eunuchs (vv. 1-8). The rest of this chapter describes the sad condition of Israel at present since some of His chosen people aren't interested in Him.

What an ideal is presented here for character and conduct! To keep God's rest in our heart-the rest of faith; to cease from ourselves; to be joined to the Lord by one Spirit; to minister to Him; to love His name; to be His servants! What more could we imagine as characteristic of the Christian soul!

Psalms 135 Praise The Lord

This Psalm begins with a hallelujah and ends with a hallelujah. It will be an endless praise. The servants who stand in the house of the Lord and in the courts are called to praise Him. Israel cleansed and redeemed is now His servant. They are His peculiar treasure. Then once more the remembrance of the deliverances of the past, the contrast with the idols of the nations and the call to the house of Aaron, the house of Israel, the house of Levi and all that fear Him, to bless the Lord.