

Thursday, July 22, 2021—Isaiah 46-48

Mobile devices have reminder functions that notify the owner when it's time to pick up the laundry or go to the doctor's office or return a phone call. The pace of life and amount of information people deal with each day make it hard to remember everything. Reminders lead to action.

God was calling Babylon to remember that He was the one true God. The nation had gods and handmade idols, but He was nothing like those were (46:5). He was able to bring salvation to His people (46:13). He had used Babylon for His purposes (47:6), but that did not excuse their idolatry. Babylon would fall because of their sin (47:1-3).

If they were useful to God, what flaw was God judging in them? They thought they were God. Babylon believed they were the greatest. There was no one like they were (47:10). They thought they could get away with anything and that no one could see their sin. At their very core was the sin every human commits. They put themselves on the throne of their lives.

God called His people to remember who He was, to repent of their destructive pride, and to see the refining He was doing in their lives through their Babylonian oppression for His glory (48:10-11). There was no peace for the wicked (48:22). Their only hope was in Him.

Remember who God is. Repent of the pride that plagues you. Submit to His refining process, and rejoice in His grace. In Him is peace, His indwelling presence that leads to flourishing.

Wednesday, July 21, 2021—Isaiah 43-45

Construction is a burden. No driver sees the sign "Construction Ahead" and rejoices. None of them is grateful for the slower pace, the tighter lanes, and the darker emotions. The end result is far off and does not provide a benefit in the present.

Through Isaiah, God was describing the reconstruction project He was planning for His people. There were dark days ahead. There was coming a fierce people and a fiercer judgment on the nation and the land, but God told them repeatedly not to fear. He was with them.

He was doing a new thing (43:19), making highways in the wilderness. He wasn't simply doing a renovation. He was going to do something magnificent, unmistakable, and beneficial. He was also going to use Cyrus, a foreign king, to rebuild (44:28). He was giving them "Construction Ahead" signs to bring them peace and joy in the process.

This was a stunning revelation. The case was clear against Israel and Judah. They had been foolish and idolatrous. None of those handmade gods could do anything, yet they had given themselves to them for generations. In mercy, God was going to bring justice for sin and restore.

This was only possible because Yahweh was the only true God. He wanted His people and the world to see that truly there was no other (43:10, 44:6, 45:5). Ask God to work in your life, removing sin and its debris, and reconstructing you for His glory and your good.

Tuesday, July 20, 2021—Isaiah 40-42

On July 20, 1969, the astronauts of Apollo 11 accomplished what no earthbound creature had ever done—walk on the surface of the moon. When he jumped from the lowest rung of the lunar module to the dusty surface below, Neil Armstrong said, "That's one small step for man. One giant leap for mankind." A new day had dawned.

With Isaiah 40, a new message has come for God's people. Isaiah cries out with words of comfort (40:1). One day, God's people will no longer face the consequences of their own sin and the misery brought as a result of other's sin. Every valley will be lifted up. Uneven ground will be level. The glory of God will be revealed. Jesus represents the most giant leap for mankind possible. God Himself will come and restore (40:9-31).

The presence of God is a promise of power and victory. “Fear not,” God says, “for I am with you. I will strengthen you. I will uphold you” (41:10). Repeatedly, God tells them not to fear because He will be with them and meet their needs. The idols of the world cannot do this.

God promised that Jesus would come with the power of the Spirit on Him to establish justice without growing weary (42:1-4). Jesus was going to give sight to the blind and defeat His enemies. A new day will come.

Praise God for His ability to restore after devastation and to renew after repentance. Pray for daily devotion that demonstrates the newness of life that comes only in Christ.

Monday, July 19, 2021—Isaiah 37-39

Runners train to compete in a race. They train, knowing the distance they will run. Runners training for a 5k plan to run five kilometers, not stopping at four. Those training for a marathon know they must cover 26.2 miles. If they stop at the 26-mile marker, they will not be finished.

God calls His people to endure to the end. He is faithful, and they are to be, too. When faced with a terrible threat, King Hezekiah called the nation to prayer. He worshiped God and then laid out the worry that gripped the nation. God responded by doing what only God could do.

Hezekiah faced another powerful enemy—an unhealthy body. As before, Hezekiah came to God in prayer. He asked God to remember his faithfulness in walking with God, and God heard his weeping. He told Isaiah to assure Hezekiah He would add years to his life and would deliver Judah from the oppression of Assyria. Hezekiah trusted God, and God showed Himself faithful and powerful.

Naively, Hezekiah celebrated God’s faithfulness by showing all his precious treasures to the Babylonians who came to Judah to congratulate Hezekiah on his restored health. Isaiah chided the king for being so friendly with the power that would one day rule Judah and cause his family to suffer. Hezekiah was barely bothered by Isaiah’s words because he knew the trouble would not come until after he was gone. Hezekiah had been faithful for so long but faltered in the last stages of the race.

Pray for faithful endurance to love God and love people well.

Sunday, July 18, 2021—Isaiah 34-36

During 2021, a herd of elephants made their way hundreds of miles from the southern regions of China toward the north. They moved slowly and methodically toward an unknown destination. While they were no immediate threat, their size and strength made stopping or diverting them impossible. They were going to do what they wanted to do.

Isaiah and the people of Judah faced a threat like they had not seen before. The king of Assyria had dominated their northern cousins, Israel, and was now threatening them. Like the elephants in China, he likely seemed like an unstoppable force. His spokesman touted him as such (36:14). There was no way King Hezekiah would be able to deliver them. After all, their God was the same God of Israel, and He had not helped them. It seemed Yahweh was no match for the king of Assyria.

In reality, God was the unstoppable force, moving along at a methodical, determined pace. He was bringing judgment on His people and the nations around them (34:8). Isaiah was proclaiming the message to be strong and not fear. God’s vengeance was coming, and He would in time save His people (35:4). Even Assyria, the power at the time, would pass from the position of power and be servant to Him.

Thank God for being a God of justice. Praise Him for making things right in His time. Pray for patience to trust in His plans and for courage to trust Him in difficulties and in

persecution.

Saturday, July 17, 2021—Isaiah 31-33

When difficulties arise, the logical reaction is to seek a solution. No one likes to be uncomfortable, so they go to the person who can help. They do the thing that will remove or lessen the challenge.

Many times there are several possible solutions, so people will choose the easiest or most expedient. Judah was facing the oppression of foreign nations. To remove this oppression, they could have turned to Yahweh, their Creator and Protector. They could have prayed in repentance for their sin and begun to walk in renewed holiness. Instead, they worried. They fretted, and they turned their allegiance to another foreign power, Egypt, the people who had 1,000 years earlier been their captor.

God expressed His displeasure over this choice (31:1). The people were trusting in chariots and horses rather than in Him. In the moment, military might was attractive, but peace was truly available only through righteousness with God. Righteousness was the only path to calm and confidence (32:17). Rather than worry, which people are so prone to do, God's people needed to wait on Him (33:2), longing for His presence, power, and protection. Their worship of Him would allow them to endure whatever hardship came their way. Yahweh is the judge, lawgiver, king and savior (33:22). There is no reason to trust any other.

Admit to God those areas in your life that lead you to worry and to idolatry—trusting other people and things to give you meaning and success. Pray for a life that worships Him rather than worries about details.

Friday, July 16, 2021—Isaiah 28-30

Countries are founded on guiding principles. Leaders write them down in a constitution for proof of the country's beginnings and reference to its guiding truths. Lawmakers discuss legal matters and then write them down so they are set and do not change. Truth then becomes a guide.

God had spoken. God had Moses write the Law. The people had neglected His word and were going to face the consequences. They had broken the law and would face the penalty of rebels. In mercy, God was going to lay a foundation in Zion even more firm than the Law. He was looking to the day when Jesus would come and bring true justice (28:16-17).

Because of their rampant and generational sin, their punishment would be extensive. Their enemies would be like fine dust (29:5), being everywhere and impossible to remove. They would be continually frustrated by the situation, like one given a document to read that he can't open or can't read (29:11-12). They'd want answers or relief and receive neither.

God had Isaiah write down more truth (30:8-9). Trusting Egypt was useless. God's people needed to rest in Him (30:15). He and He alone would deliver them and show them the way to life (30:21).

Thank God for His Word that teaches and guides. Thank Him for Jesus who is the Word made flesh and the source of deliverance. Pray for repentance from ignoring His word and trusting in idols who cannot save or strengthen. Read the word and apply it each day.