

Monday, July 22, 2019—Isaiah 46-48

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Isaiah foresaw the day when both “the idols and the ones carrying them are bowed down. The gods cannot protect the people, and the people cannot protect the gods. They go off into captivity together” (46:2). What is devastating in its humiliation and exposure of sinful choices is actually a great action of God’s grace. He illustrates the emptiness of sin and the impotence of idols so His people can see clearly and repent.

His call for repentance is a call to abundant life. “I am ready to set things right, not in the distant future, but right now! I am ready to save Jerusalem and give my glory to Israel” (46:13). He is calling people away from the destruction waiting the wicked and to the redemption only He can provide. He is calling people away from the self-exalting attitude of Babylon. “I am, and there is no other” (47:10). The illusion of self-sufficiency and lack of accountability always end poorly. God warns His people of that continually and calls them to walk with Him away from it.

God rescues His people for their good but for His honor (48:11). He will not share His glory with any other idol or man. There is no peace for the wicked (48:27), but there is joy and fulfillment for His own.

Pray for humility and obedience that honor Him alone.

Sunday, July 21, 2019—Isaiah 43-45

Casting Crowns recorded a song in the early 2000s entitled “Slow Fade.” The lyrics spoke of the dangers of compromise and the destructive results of thoughts, choices, and words. People, marriages, and families never crumble in a day, but when they do crumble, the harm is great.

God promoted His greatness to His people in Isaiah 43, telling them He was the only God (43:10-12). He was leading them in a new way, from darkness to light, from defeat to victory. There was no longer any reason to be afraid because He was with them in their challenges, and He was their light in the darkness.

Despite all this greatness, His people refused to ask for help and, in fact, had grown tired of Him (43:22). They had drifted away from Him and no longer honored Him with worship.

To add to their sinfulness, many had begun to follow and trust idols. This was the height of foolishness. A man fashioned an idol by hand, which made him hungry, then used some of the same wood to make a fire to cook some food (44:12-17). They had slowly faded into rebellion.

In grace and mercy, God was calling His people back. He had paid the price for them to be forgiven and set free. He was working human events so Cyrus would rise to power and rebuild the Temple. He was doing this for their blessing and for His glory (45:4-8).

Ask God to expose any idols causing you to drift from Him.

Saturday, July 20, 2019—Isaiah 40-42

On July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong took one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind. He set foot on the lunar surface, and for the first time, a human being was walking somewhere other than earth. History had been made, and a different future was set in motion.

With his fortieth chapter, Isaiah, too, puts forth a different view of the future. His first 39 chapters spoke much of judgment against Israel and her neighbors, but the fortieth chapter speaks of comfort for God's people. "Tell [Jerusalem] her sad days are gone and that her sins are pardoned" (40:1). This good news was worth shouting! God was worthy of praise.

Isaiah knew there was no one like God, and nothing compared to Him. His people needed to realize the justice and righteousness He exercised, and the grace and mercy available in Him. "He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak" (40:29).

God encouraged Israel to consider who He was and the righteous ways He had acted in judging them. In the end, however, God was going to call Jacob back to Himself (41:9). He would strengthen and restore them and use them to judge their enemies. No idols could work in this way.

The Lord was going to raise up a Servant who would demonstrate His righteousness and be a light to the nations (42:1-11). He would lead Israel from darkness to light (42:16). God was preparing the people for Jesus, God who would set foot on earth, a giant leap for mankind.

Friday, July 19, 2019—Isaiah 37-39

In 1 Samuel 17, David came to check on his brothers, and he heard the Philistine Goliath challenging the army of Israel and defying God Himself. David was incredulous. How could an unholy man speak of a holy God this way? He was motivated to act in faith and preserve God's honor.

When King Hezekiah heard the report that Assyria was threatening Judah and Jerusalem, one of the few hopes he had was that God had heard how Assyria defied the living God with their threats (37:4). He had little confidence in himself and his military, but He knew God could defeat this terrible enemy if God had the will to do so. At a loss as to what to do, Hezekiah went to the Temple and prayed. He did not begin with requests or panic. He began with worship (37:16) and then made his case for deliverance (37:17-20). Through Isaiah, God promised deliverance and gave him a sign (37:30-31). "The passion of the Lord Almighty will make this happen" (37:32), and the king of Assyria and his army did indeed soon fall.

Hezekiah soon needed deliverance from another enemy—sickness and death (38:1), so he turned once again to prayer. God gave him health and a miraculous sign of His grace and mercy. Hezekiah saw God's delivery on several levels, but he could not escape the enemy of pride (39:1-8). He was blinded to a poor decision and consequence by selfish interests.

Praise God for His holiness. Live to honor His name.

Thursday, July 18, 2019—Isaiah 34-36

Isaiah described the coming judgment of God in dark, violent terms. What God was going to do to His people and the surrounding nations was a result of all their sin, and the cataclysmic level of action testified to the depth of hatred God has toward sin. What people so often excuse or overlook are the very things God

judges eternally.

He said His judgment against Edom would never end (34:10-17). Edom was the land of the people of Esau, the brother of Jacob, the one who sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. These are the people who descended from Abraham who should have known Yahweh and the faith He required, yet they instead went their own way and watched Israel wander from God themselves and rejoiced in their suffering.

When God finally judged sin, life would return. The desert would blossom (35:1-2), and the people could have hope. He would judge the enemies of His people, and He would bring sight to the blind and strength to the lame (35:3-7). Joy and gladness will replace sorrow and mourning.

The judgment of God does not mean the absence of God. He promises never to leave His people. Assyria came against Judah and King Hezekiah and mocked them for trusting in Yahweh. No other peoples' gods had delivered them. Why would they think Yahweh would be able to protect them from Assyria? They had a choice to make under pressure.

Thank God for His love for righteousness, His faithfulness to His people, and His hatred for sin. Pray for loyalty and boldness.

Wednesday, July 17, 2019—Isaiah 31-33

Children enjoy reading about and dressing like their favorite super heroes, but they one day realize these are fictional characters with no power to do what the stories say they do. Teenagers often rely on collective ideas and pursuits but one day recognize they have pooled much ignorance and practiced zeal without wisdom. Things crumble without a firm foundation.

As the drums of war beat around God's people, they were considering putting their trust in Egypt to fend off Assyria. Destruction awaited anyone who made that decision (31:1). God was the one they needed to fear and trust.

Eventually, the godless will admit the greatness of God. They will see Him for who He is and tremble. "Which one of us,' they cry, 'can live here in the presence of this all-consuming fire? The ones who can live here are those who are

honest and fair, who reject making a profit by fraud, who stay far away from bribes, who refuse to listen to those who plot murder, who shut their eyes to all enticement to do wrong” (33:14b-16).

In contrast, those who trust God will see the King in all His splendor. They will remember the times their enemies plotted to destroy them and rejoice in how God has rescued and restored them (33:17-24). He will forgive their sins and rebuild their fellowship with Him.

Praise God for His strength and His righteousness that bring peace and fruitfulness (32:15-17). Pray for a life of confidence that trusts in Him alone and brings glory to Him as others see that unwavering faith.

Tuesday, July 16, 2019—Isaiah 28-30

Charles Schulz created some of the most endearing cartoon characters of all time with his *Peanuts* gang. Charlie Brown, Linus, and the others attended a school where the teacher spoke in a most unusual way. On the televised episodes, her voice sounded to the viewers like a muted trumpet. The kids understood, but viewers simply could not.

God had been speaking to His people for generations about repenting, but they would not listen. It was as if He were speaking another language, so He told them He would send someone who did indeed speak another language (28:11) to judge them for their sin. There would be no escape because they simply would not measure up to His standards of justice and righteousness (28:17-22). The people called themselves by His name, but their hearts were not His (29:13).

Every society and, ultimately, every person that falls into sin does so because they believe God does not see them (29:15) or God doesn't matter. They believe they are hiding their actions from an all-knowing, all-seeing God, or they believe the One who created all and sustains all is not able to judge them for breaking His law. It's complete nonsense, but everyone makes the mistake throughout their lives. They put their trust in people, possessions, and positions that have no power (30:1-7).

Once God judges His people, He goes to work restoring them to the people

He has made them to be (29:5-8, 17-21; 30:18-33). Praise God for speaking truth and sending Truth so we can hear and know Him.

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