

Tuesday, July 21, 2020—Isaiah 43-45

God has always demanded exclusivity. He does not want His people dividing their affection, attention, and allegiance between Him and other so-called gods. He alone is the true God “and apart from me there is no savior” (43:11). It was the compromise of His people that led to their downfall. They trusted in idols who could not save.

God did not want them to dwell on the past (43:18). “See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland” (43:19). He was going to restore His presence and power to His people and bring blessing. They had no reason to fear because of who He was and what He could do.

The people of Israel could not deny the sin they had committed (43:26-28). Their fathers had taken wood and used some of it for fuel for the fire and some to fashion the form of a god. They had taken iron and made tools from some and idols from the rest (44:1-20). God was willing to remove the stain of that sin (44:22) and restore His people.

God wanted to do this work so His people and the world would know without a doubt that He alone was God (45:3-5). “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other” (45:22). In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength, and those who rebel against Him will be put to shame (45:24).

Monday, July 20, 2020—Isaiah 40-42

The Old Testament has 39 books which tell of the story of God’s people and His first covenant with them. There are narratives and songs and prophecies and more that detail the interaction of God with His people, but then there was silence for about 400 years until John the Baptist came and began preparing the way for Jesus and the new covenant.

Isaiah 40 foretells this day of good news. After 39 chapters of indictment and judgment, Isaiah sees a day coming when Israel’s hard labor will be done and a voice will cry out to prepare the way for the Lord, and the glory of the Lord will be revealed (40:1-5). The good news will proclaim that men are feeble and temporary, but God’s word lasts forever (40:6-8). The wisdom of God exceeds anything man can offer, and nations and leaders are nothing before Him. The One who has the power to create and sustain all things will give strength to the weary who trust Him (40:25-31).

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (41:10). His presence with His people is the heart of the good news He prophesied through Isaiah and fulfilled in Christ. He will hold the hand of those who trust Him (42:6) and judge those who refuse to walk in His way (42:18-25).

Thank God for the salvation and hope that come in Jesus.

Sunday, July 19, 2020—Isaiah 37-39

What do you do when everything you’ve done is right but it turns out all wrong? As they old saying goes, “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” Hezekiah had brought spiritual revival to Judah like no other king, yet he faced a threat from Assyria that seemed insurmountable, and the enemy mocked his faith. What did Hezekiah do? He made lemonade.

Hezekiah sought counsel from Isaiah the prophet. Then, Hezekiah prayed. Rather than beginning with the frustration and fear he felt, Hezekiah began with worship, recognizing the God to whom He prayed and remembering His faithfulness. Then, he prayed for deliverance. Assyria had mocked not only God’s people but God Himself (37:23), so God defeated the king of Assyria by His own zeal and power (37:32).

Some time later, when Hezekiah was told he would soon die, he prayed again. He wanted to remain living so he could continue praising God (38:29) and passing the faith to the next generation. Again, God heard his prayer and provided deliverance, giving him another 15 years of life.

While Hezekiah was righteous, he was not perfect. When envoys came from Babylon, the rising power that would defeat Assyria, Hezekiah showed them everything in his armory and his treasures. Isaiah told Hezekiah the day would come when all those valuables would become Babylon’s, but Hezekiah was not troubled because it would happen after he died (39:8). He lacked compassion for those who would suffer later.

Ask God to make you a person of prayer, faith, and compassion.

Saturday, July 18, 2020—Isaiah 34-36

People can always find others who are worse than they are. They look across the political aisle or glance into another pew at church. Other parents make worse mistakes with their children, and that husband is a complete jerk to his wife. Comparison says, "I'm so much better than . . ."

That smugness fades quickly when people stop comparing themselves to others and compare themselves to the complete perfection and unapproachable holiness of God. When God looks at the nations, He sees them as completely guilty and worthy of complete destruction (33:2,5).

Knowing His righteousness to punish sin and remove its stain on His name and His gifts, God's people become humble and grateful. They realize His salvation and rescue are acts of His grace and not something they earned or deserved. "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knee that gives way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you'" (35:2-3). He will make a way for those made holy.

This humility and assurance are vital when the attacks of life come. People will mock those who have faith and threaten those who trust God. They will encourage compromise or threaten persecution (36:1-22). No one is holy like God. No one has power like God. No one loves and fulfills promises like God. He is the only One worthy of devotion and worship.

Admit to Him faults and weaknesses. Pray for a life of humility and assurance that obeys Him alone and leads others to do the same.

Friday, July 17, 2020—Isaiah 31-33

Everything we look for in help from the world is available from the Lord. He is the source of strength. He is the definition of hope. He is the author of life. He is the pathway to deliverance. No power or person on earth can do what He can do to the extent He can do it.

We forget that too often. We want what we want, and we want it now. We don't want to be patient and wait on the Lord. We don't want to be contrite and allow the answers to come according to God's plan. We move forward and look for answers without Him to our own detriment.

God's people wanted help to defeat Assyria, so they looked to Egypt. "But the Egyptians are men and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit" (31:3a). Assyria would fall by a sword not made by man (31:8).

If God can win battles, imagine the kingdom He can establish. "See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice" (32:1). God was going to set everything right. "The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever" (32:17). What they longed for would come from God in time.

"O Lord, be gracious to us; we long for you. Be our strength every morning, our salvation in times of distress" (33:2). "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; it is he who will save us" (33:22).

Thursday, July 16, 2020—Isaiah 28-30

God has made people to worship. Everyone finds someone or something that stirs emotion, draws attention, and demands allegiance to a life-altering level. It may be the sports team whose jersey we wear or the teen idol whose music is constantly in our ears. We worship the bass boat and the places it takes us or the children who fill our homes.

God has made us to worship Him alone, but our hearts are restless and easily distracted and choose lesser things. God told Ephraim they were consumed with a leader who would be laid low. God was going to demonstrate His superiority and be the true satisfaction they needed (28:5). They were spiritually dulled and physically intoxicated and couldn't process reality. God was going to shake them out of their stupor and help them see their broken condition. He was going to send a Cornerstone to help them rebuild their lives around justice and righteousness (28:16-17).

Their unrighteousness was severe, so the attack against it would be severe. They came near Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him (29:13), so foreigners were going to take their land. They were going to feel dulled by its severity and swiftness, but from that God would be able to work restoration

and flourishing once again in His people and His land.

God says salvation comes from repentance and rest. Strength comes from quietness and trust, yet many refuse it (30:15). Evaluate the true sources of salvation and strength in your life. Walk with Him (30:21).

Wednesday, July 15, 2020—Isaiah 25-27

“O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago” (25:1). This sounds like a message cross-stitched on a piece of wall art or the promise claimed by one who has seen great blessing. Instead, this is Isaiah’s praise to God after God has allowed marauders to level the city. How could someone be thankful at such a miserable time?

Isaiah knew God was faithful to keep His promises. He had promised blessing and brought blessing. He had promised discipline and brought discipline. God did what He said, so Isaiah praised Him. Isaiah knew God would restore His people and be a refuge in the future because He had promised to do so. He could rest in that certainty. “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal” (26:3-4).

God was judging His people, but He would restore them and tend them like a vineyard (27:1-2). Then, He will turn His eyes on the evil of the world and bring final judgment. At the sound of the great trumpet, the whole world will look on Him and worship Him for who He is (27:12-13).

Thank God today for the difficult times that remind you of His faithfulness. Ask Him to tend your life so you become more fruitful. Pray that this fruitfulness brings leads to worship Him.