

PUTTING THE PAST ASIDE Sunday School- January 16, 2011

Unifying Topic: REASSURANCE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Lesson Text

I. The Lord's Chosen Servants (Isaiah 48:14-16)

II. Following The Lord's Commands (Isaiah 48:17-19)

III. The Lord's Providential Care (Isaiah 45:21-22)

The Main Thought: Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. (Isaiah 48:20,KJV).

Unifying Principle: People make mistakes, live incorrectly, and need to have the past put aside for right living in the future. How can past mistakes be corrected and replaced with right living? God promises to forgive sin and to redeem His people.

Lesson Aim: To help students know that God redeems us and blesses our futures.

Life aim: To teach students that God chooses us, His servants to carry out His will, he helps us to learn from our past mistakes and overcome them, and He livingly provides for all our needs as He enriches our futures.

48:14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The Lord hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans.

48:15 I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

48:16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

48:17 Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

48:18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

48:19 Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

48:21 And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

48:22 There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

HISTORY:

Chapter 48:1-13

ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS REBUKED

48:1 The message is addressed to the **house of Jacob** in its totality, which includes both Israel and Judah. Here God admonishes the hypocrites among His people who **make mention of the God of Israel** (i.e., give lip service to Him) but do not follow **in truth and righteousness** (i.e., are not really saved).

48:2 He proceeds to say that they both call themselves by His name and by that of the **holy city**, but in reality their heart is far from Him. The Israelites felt confident because they lived in Jerusalem, the city with God's Temple. They depended upon their heritage—their city and their temple—but this was false security because they did not depend on God. Do you feel secure because you go to church or live in a certain country? Heritage, buildings, or nations cannot give us a relationship with God. We must truly depend on Him personally, with all our hearts and minds. In spite of their seeming piety, many of these Israelites practiced idolatry on the side, and thus it is that the Lord reminds them again of His ability to predict the future lest they attribute their success to their own **idol** or their **graven image**.

48:3-6 Because the Lord is the one true God, He alone can reveal the **former things...new things...hidden things**. In spite of this prediction of coming judgment, God reminds them that only the true and living God could predict such a deportation to Babylon more than a hundred years in advance. He even knew they were **obstinate, stiff-necked, stubborn, idol worshippers, deaf, treacherous, and rebellious**. Is God saying the same about us? The meaning of verse 7 and 8, in essence, God is telling the Jewish people that He knew even before He called them **from the womb** that they would sin against Him in spite of His great prophetic prediction. "**Transgressor**" refers to one who rebels against the Lord. The Lord's people gave the appearance of being rebellious (vv1, 2); they did not obey the Lord's commands. They closed their ears to the Words of the Lord (v8). So, to cure their hardness and idolatry, God told them in advance what He would do. As we hear God's Word, genuine faith makes a difference in the way a person lives every day.

48:9-11 The Lord has a plan for His people. In spite of all the tragic judgments that will come upon Judah and Israel. The Lord will not cut His people off completely, for the sake of His name (referring to His reputation or character). He would instead **refine her but not with silver**. God reminds them **I have chosen** (tried) **thee in the furnace of affliction** (referring particularly to their trials in Babylon). We are here reminded that even God's acts of judgment are ultimately acts of mercy. The reason for His severe treatment of His people is that they might emerge from their afflictions minus the dross of their sin and that they might reflect His glory and greatness among them. There was nothing in Israel's actions, attitudes, or accomplishments to compel God to love and to save them. **But for His own sake**, to show who He is and what He can do, He saved them. God does not save us because we are good, but because He loves us and because of His forgiving nature. Thus, the chapter is a celebration of divine mercy which always determines the activity of God on behalf of His people. Though they deserve to be obliterated from the face of the earth, nevertheless, He will preserve them.

48:12-13 Both **Jacob and Israel** are commanded to listen to the Lord as they are referred to as **my called** (chosen). In spite of all their failures, God reminds them that He has called them and chosen them to be His people. **I am He**—I am the absolute and eternally unchangeable one, the Alpha and omega of all history; **the First and the Last** (means from whom and to whom are all things [Rom.11:36]). Further, God states that with His own hands He laid the **foundation of the earth** and has **spanned the heavens**. His Omniscient power over the creation is such that when He calls nature to obedience, both heaven and earth **stand up together** (that is, they literally obey Him instantly). This assemblage of nature shall be shocked by God's persistent love for the Jewish people.

LESSON:

Isaiah 48:14-16 The Lord's Chosen Servants

48:14-15 Again it reiterated from verse 12: **Come and listen! Assemble and hear!** And it is because of this simple fact that **The Lord hath loved him** (Cyrus) that He shall bring judgment (**His pleasure**) on **Babylon** and the **Chaldeans**. When God proclaimed this, it must have shocked His audience. How can the Lord love a pagan king, an enemy? But it was Cyrus whom God would use to free His people from their captivity in Babylon. Cyrus' errand was to set Israel free by conquering Babylon, then to decree that all Jews could return to their homeland. Who but a Prophet of God could tell such an inconceivable but true story almost 200 years before it happened? This is all the more startling when one realizes the Babylonian Empire, at the time of Isaiah's Prophecy, had not even come into being, much less a settled power in the world! So, such Prophecies proclaim the inexhaustible power of God, plus His Omniscience (*the knowledge of all things, past, present, and future*). Just as God's message of the faithful pledge of His love to His people was one of encouragement to Israel in the Old Testament, so it is a promise of blessings to the New Testament church as well. Because all of us are sinners, we deserve the wrath of God. God personally **called** Cyrus and **brought** and commissioned him and even made his way prosperous; just as He has called, brought, and commissioned Jesus Christ to save and make our way prosperous.

48:16 We have a tendency to complicate God's message as we add to it, however, when God talks through His messenger, whomever He has chosen, our job is to listen. The closer we **come** to God, the better we can **listen** to what He has to say. God **from the beginning** and from His first dealings with Israel, He had raised up a succession of Prophets. God through them had declared His will, **not in secret** but openly and plainly, so that all that heard might understand. Notice the distinction in verse 16 between **the Lord God and his Spirit**: There is evidently a change in the speaker here. In the former part of the verse, it is God who is the speaker. But here it is he who is sent to bear the message. The pronoun "**Me**" the last word of this verse pertains to the coming Messiah. You see the Lord has chosen many!

Isaiah 48:17-19 Following The Lord's Commands

48:17 Several titles are used for God in verse 17. He is recognized as the Lord (*Yahweh*), thy Redeemer (*go'al*), the Holy One of Israel (*qedōsh yisra'el*). It is here God says, I AM the Lord your God which teaches them to profit (how to live right and live well both spiritually and financially). It is nobody else but Him! And they are to look to no other but Him! The Word of God is extolled here!

48:18-19 If the Word is followed, the result will be a tremendous profit in every capacity for the Israelites. In harmony

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with the teaching of the Book of Proverbs, Isaiah emphasizes the total blessing of prosperity from God upon those who have surrendered to His Lordship and authority. However, this blessing does not come by accident, but only by obedience to God's commandments. The idea of this passage is that Israel should try to keep the commandments to the best of their ability. In truth, they were not capable of doing so, but they were supposed to try. Had they sincerely tried, the Lord would have abundantly blessed them. This obedience will bring peace...as a river and righteousness as the waves of the sea, meaning that the blessing of God would continually flow in their direction. Israel's seed (children) would be too numerous to count, as the sand along the seashore and the offspring (grandchildren) of thy bowels as the gravel (grains of sand). Because of His love for His people, they shall not be cut off nor be destroyed from the face of the earth. He has promised them an eternal inheritance and they shall receive it.

NOT APART OF THE LESSON:

48:20 Go ye forth of Babylon is a promise to the Israelites of their future deliverance. The sons of Israel were to forsake Babylon and her idols and to testify to the ends of the earth that their Deliverance was due to Jehovah The Messiah, and not to any false god. No wonder they were singing as their ancestors sang after they crossed the Red Sea; free from Egypt's slavery at last! Whatever is holding you captive? The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob from the slavery of sin. When you allow the Lord to free you from captivity, you will be singing too.

Isaiah 48:21-22 The Lord's Providential Care

48:21-22 God's providential care rescued them: they thirsted not through the deserts; He caused water to flow from the "Rock" for them. As the "Rock" was Christ for Israel coming out of Egypt, the "Rock" was Christ as they would come out of Babylon. Though His people may come under temporary judgment, they still have access to the God of peace. Those who follow Him will never thirst, while those who do not follow Him will have no peace. There is no peace for the wicked. Many people cry out for comfort, security, and relief, but they haven't taken the first steps to remove the sin in their lives and open channels to God. They have not sought to repent and trust in Him even though He takes mighty good care of them.

SUMMARY:

The prophet exhorted the people to listen to his message from God who has spoken plainly to His people and fulfilled His words to them throughout their history.

Isaiah served to remind Israel of her history of wasted opportunities because she failed to heed the Word of the Lord. God Himself had been their faithful teacher, but they refused to listen to and learn from Him. Her history would have been different had she been obedient to God's Word. They forfeited many blessings because of their stubborn refusal to listen to God. Among the benefits the people forfeited are: [1] peace or "well-being", [2] "righteousness", (which included victory and salvation) and [3] the fulfillment of God's promise to make them as numerous as the sea.

Isaiah contains the long-awaited call to return home. The prophet shouted the call and invited the people to rejoice and join him in spreading this Good News of God's deliverance to the ends of the earth. The prophet assured the people that God would make adequate provision for their return home just as He did for their forefathers in the first Exodus (48:21). The words of verse 22 serve as a warning to any who might choose to stay in Babylon and not undertake the journey home. Josephus writes that many Jews did remain in Babylon, "being unwilling to leave their possessions." For these, there would be no peace. God constantly reassured the people of their deliverance and how their seed and offspring would be blessed and not cut off. He had them to look back on what He had already done. Now it's time to put the past aside and move because provisions for a Deliverer has come! It's time to follow My commands and come up higher! It's time to see that when you needed water and was thirsty, I provided; when you need peace, I'm your provision. Now when they shout this news, the past is put aside. Their thoughts will no longer be on what happened, but what is to happen!

APPLICATION:

Consider when disobeying God, it may give us what we want but it will rob us of what God wants to give us. If we cling to the old things we will miss out on the new things.

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