

Isaiah Chapters 43-44 Summary - John Karmelich

Title: Why we should care that God curses and blesses the nation of Israel!

I have stated for years that if the Bible had a subtitle, it should be "I'm God, you're not, deal with it!" It is important to keep that mind as I discuss these two chapters. They're about the fact God will preserve and bless the nation of Israel despite their historical struggle with idolatry. A reason He allowed Israel to go into captivity to the Babylon Empire, was that it was full of idols. The good news of the captivity is, for the most part, cured Israel from idols. Idolatry includes having things to show what we worship. The best way to think of idolatry is it's anything we trust in outside of God Himself!

One of the things most of us sort of know but don't think about is: 85% of the Bible deals with Israel as an entity. One of the great mistakes many Christian churches do wrong is thinking the Christian church replaces Israel as His chosen people! I figure most of you (my readers) accept that God has a great plan for Israel as an entity and that's a separate issue for His plans for the Christian church. Consider all the efforts made to wipe out Israel as an entity through history! Why? Satan wins if there's no Israel, since that means there's no nation for Jesus to rule the world from when He returns. Lots of historical efforts have been made to destroy Israel as an entity including obviously Hitler, and even recent warfare.

All that leads to my opening question: Why should we care? I realize most of us accept that the Jewish people are God's chosen! How does that affect my life here and now? For starters, remember God can and did forgive Israel of all its sins, doesn't that also teach He'll forgive us of all our sins when we trust in Jesus for our salvation? Does it also mean all Jewish people are saved? Of course not. This is about the fact God is keeping His unconditional promises to bless Israel as a nation. The book of Revelation teaches when Jesus returns a large percentage of Israel will believe in Jesus. That is the purpose of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses for Jesus mentioned in Revelation 7. Okay we get that God still has a destiny for Israel as an entity. Consider the next time we sin and think we could do better, God still redeems us despite our sins. I've come to realize that our behavior matters in terms of our rewards in heaven but in terms of salvation it is strictly our belief that Jesus paid for all our sins, past present and future.

Believe it or not, all that leads perfectly to these two chapters! The short version is it is about knowing God is forgiving Israel of all their sins even though they (future to Isaiah) were kicked out their land as it was due to their sins. These chapters are here to assure that nation God has a wonderful plan for their future despite their sins. The issue is NOT how good or bad the Israelites (or we) are. The issue is God made an unconditional promise to bless that nation and God's going to rule the world from Israel. That means Israel must exist as a national entity and believe in Jesus as God! OK then, time for details:

Like I said, my subtitle for the Bible should be "I'm God, you're not, deal with it!" The first few verses remind the Israelites God not only made the world but separated the Israelites to be a living witness for Him. The text mentions people of other nations died for God to carry out His plan! The Egyptians are mentioned along with two neighboring countries to say in effect, "Many there died in the plagues that I allowed not because they're worse than you, but because I choose Israel to be my witness to the world! Verse 2 mentions walking through empty riverbeds, (e.g., Israel crossing the Jordan when they entered the land) and fires not consuming them (like Daniel's three friends, future to Isaiah!). The point isn't all Israelites will live a long life. The point is God guides history so they'll be chosen as a witness for Him (faults and all) and eventually will exist in the land of Israel again!"

In Verses 5-7 God asks Israelites to come from all directions back to the land. The shorter fulfillment's the return after Babylon (only about 50,000 choose that). The other fulfillment will be when Jesus will rule the world from Israel! In Verse 8 Isaiah says in effect it does not matter if one is blind or say deaf, God will take care of that! Verse 10 is another reminder God calls them to be His witnesses, just as He calls us for the same purpose! Bottom line, God wants us to know He is going through with His eternal plans whether we choose to get involved or not. What we do for Him benefits our eternal rewards, but not His plans for the world!

In Verse 10, Isaiah asks his readers to praise God for what He's going to do. It's a reminder that despite whatever we are dealing with God will win in the end so "Don't sweat the small stuff!" Yes, we need to deal with our problems, but God wants us to keep the big picture in mind! The issue is seeing life from God's perspective: Saved people are part of His "chosen", therefore praise Him. It's more than a call to salvation. It is also a reminder God will guide our lives for His glory! I learned that God may not give great riches, but He will pull us through whatever we're dealing with. God wants us to be a witness for Him as we go through our lives!

One thing I know about Isaiah is he can't go a chapter without getting shots in for ignoring God! Here's a reminder in the middle of Chapter 43 that God knows ALL things, and we can't hide from Him! I get that I'm preaching to devout Christians who believe that. Still all of us mess up! It helps to realize God is aware of all we're thinking let alone doing! Anyway, the chapter ends with the reminder of fact most of the Israelites have suffered for past sins. It's so we remember that just because Israel and the church both have a great eternal destiny is no excuse for ignoring Him in this lifetime!

One thing to catch is Isaiah's going back and forth between praise for a wonderful eternal destiny and a lot of lecturing on ignoring God! In Chapter 44 we're back to praise for the great things God will do in the world around us! The first five verses list ways God will bless us. Verses 6-8 has pleas to not fear as God's got things under control. Isaiah gives another round of condemnation in Verses 9-20. He tells us about Israel's history of making idol statutes and using spare parts for other things (e.g., they'd carve idols from wood and then using the leftovers for firewood). I realize physical idols are different today. When Isaiah wrote this, physical idols represented things other than God! Despite our human tendency to turn from God it's not going to affect His plans for His people!

The good news is the chapter then turns positive again. In effect it's saying despite all the sins that they (or we) commit, God's going through with His plans of eternal blessing because those promises are not conditional. The last part of the chapter leads into Chapter 45 (no chapter numbers in the original text) about a man named Cyrus. He wasn't born till about 150 years after Isaiah. Cyrus is mentioned in this text and history records an Isaiah scroll was shown to Cyrus and that impressed him to let the Israelites return to their land (more on that in the next lesson!)

In summary Isaiah jumps back and forth between announcing God's wonderful plans for the future that He will fulfill based on His unconditional promises mixed with condemnation for ignoring Him. Yes, I know I'm "preaching the choir" but even us devout believers (myself included) require reminders we're always on the clock for Him!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on one of the links below. It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. The rest of this email is links to questions you may have. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!