

Isaiah Chapters 46-47 Summary - John Karmelich

Title: Are we trusting in God and what else?

After months studying Isaiah, I noticed he's obsessed with the topic of "Are you trusting God or not?" I should start by stating, Isaiah's been focused the last set of chapters discussing the Babylonians Empire that didn't exist when he wrote this. Roughly 100 years after this book, the Israelites who survived that conquering were taken into captivity and forced to resettle in what is Iraq today and their empire. God allowed this to occur because Israel collectively was obsessed with worshiping other deities. I suspect the Israelites thought if these guys conquered us, they must have superior gods! That led Isaiah to give a sermon on who's really in charge and describe His eternal plan for those who put their trust in God as opposed to the eternal destiny of those who don't!

I can just hear everyone saying, "I believe Jesus is God, I go to church almost every Sunday, so why is it I should care about all of this?" As I was taught a long time ago, "God doesn't want to be #1 on a list of 10, but on a list of 1". In essence that means He wants to be part of every aspect of our lives. Yes, it means we're always on the clock for Him and we're to be a good witness for Him in every aspect of our lives! Since we're always on the clock for Jesus, that means we're always called to be His witnesses to the world around us. It makes us ponder whether we are trusting God to be in charge of our lives, or if we're caring about things other than Him! I'm aware we can't focus on God 24/7. I realize all of us are sinners and mess up all the time! This is about considering our lives to ask if God is central in all those aspects. That in effect is what living the Christian life is all about!

Which leads me back to these two chapters! On the surface, they are asking the Israelites who they are trusting in when they're not where God wants them to be! This applies to when where we are suffering for some reason or not being where He wants us to be. This section can help in times of trials to remind us He's still in charge even when the world around us cares for other things. As we study the details of these chapters, don't think about the Middle East millenniums ago! The issue is to think about what we focus on through the day and making God the center of our lives.

OK then, time for details! The last chapter was all about how God will use Cyrus, an "Iran" emperor to teach the Israelites God is still in charge! That emperor did not live until 150 years after Isaiah. While Isaiah's on the topic of the Israelites in captivity, Cyrus will allow them to go home. Isaiah's discussing the gods in the Babylonian Empire where the Israelites lived for 70 years again, long after Isaiah wrote his book. Isaiah's point is the Babylonian deities had to be carried from place to place to be honored as deities! The underlying point is to ponder, "Are we trusting God to carry us or are we carrying another thing that guides our lives?" There's a Jewish argument that it required all that time in captivity for the Israelites to collectively stop worshipping idols. I get that for the most part people don't carry statues of what we worship. The question to ponder is, if God told us we must give up "this or that" can or would we? Obviously, He isn't anti-hobby. What Isaiah's saying in effect is do we care about Him more than that "thing"? If we're embarrassed to discuss God in certain situations, then that is a danger of being an idol in that situation! That leads me back to Isaiah!

Isaiah is giving one of His speeches in effect of there's God and there's a waste of time! The waste is a reference to the false gods. He discusses the wasted silver and gold made to build false gods (like we'll spend money on things that ultimately are a waste of our funds)! Most of this chapter is a big "I'm God so deal with it!" sermon. The reason Isaiah "goes off on this", is it's so easy for us to focus on the issue

of the moment and forget that God not only is in charge, but He calls us to be a witness for Him! It is a big reminder of WHY we're saved in the first place, not to ignore Him, but to use our lives as a witness for Him! Obviously, we have problems we must deal with, but the point is while we're dealing with our issues we still must remember why we're created in the first place!

At this point Isaiah gives another rant against Babylon. You might recall that Isaiah spent Chapters 13-14 going off on the fall of Babylon again long before they ever became an empire! So why state all of that again? One reason is because the Israelites will be living in that empire for 70 years. God wanted to grasp that it's not permanent. As I've explained in the past, when Cyrus conquered Babylon, it wasn't destroyed. It was a major city for hundreds of more years. Babylon had the first organized rebellion to God's rule (Genesis 11) and I suspect a revised Babylon will be the center of the last one in history!

Again, if Isaiah spent two chapters describing the fall of Babylon (Chapters 13-14), why have another "Down goes Babylon" speech which is essentially Chapter 47! The key reason is the Israelites will be there for 70 years, so Isaiah wanted to make it clear about the fate of Babylon! For us, it is a reminder when we trust in anything but God the text is reminding us what a waste of time that will be!

Another thing to realize is there are many Christians who **WRONGLY** think God is done with Israel as an entity. God made an unconditional promise to Israel that he'd save them in the end. As I like saying if Jesus is going to rule the world from Israel there must be an Israel to rule the world from! There was a t-shirt that was popular in Israel not too long ago that reads, "Attack us, we need the land!"

The underlying point here is about the danger of trusting in ANYTHING other than God! It is a classic question all of us must ponder at times. Are we trusting in God "and what else"? Like all people there are times when I get down and don't see a solution to my problems. Of course, I'll pray for guidance as I try to make the best decisions I can. For the Israelites back then, living in a foreign land I'm sure they had their moments of doubt. That is why Isaiah is trying to encourage them to trust God even when the situation looks impossible. It is the classic line that God will never leave or forsake us, but He will test us to ask in effect, "You trust Me now, even through all this?"

Anyway, most of Chapter 47 is a rant against Babylon. The underlying message is "Don't trust them as they're going down for the count!" As many of you know Cyrus was famous for conquering the city of Babylon without a battle! If God can change the course of history that quickly, what makes us think He will abandon us in our hour of need as well!

Therefore, I want to end this message on a note of encouragement. This is all ancient history and Israel is back in the land! The question for us is, if God could make them an independent nation after almost three millennium scattered around the world, or ruled by different entities, why do we fail to trust God when we are just as much His chosen people as they are? I have lived long enough to know there will always be problems to deal with. All I can do is make the best decisions I can and trust God's guiding me the way He desires! So, this "down goes Babylon" chapter should be a message of encouragement for those of us trusting God daily for His guidance!

With that said, I 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's still a joy to study the Bible and again I'm grateful for all who read this! The rest of this email is links to questions you might have. If you are new here, realize you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks again for reading this!