

God's Restored People Shall Prosper

Bible Background • ISAIAH 49:18–26

Printed Text • ISAIAH 49:18–23 | Devotional Reading • PROVERBS 25:21–26

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will IDENTIFY relationships in which individuals or congregations have experienced God's restoration, FIND comfort in the plans God has for their lives, and PROCLAIM God's justice and mercy for His people.

In Focus

Jakiesha, an accountant, was going through a difficult time in her life. She was angry with God and the church. No one was doing things the way they should, so she thought. She became so angry she refused to pray anymore. She even made the decision to no longer attend church. Lastly, she gave Pastor Fred a piece of her mind.

Concerned, Jakiesha's Gran-gran, persuaded her to come over for dinner one evening. They talked about all God had provided in Jakiesha's life: her safe home, her scholarship to an HBCU, her first job. "What are you even mad about, baby?" Gran-gran asked.

Jakiesha felt ashamed now even mentioning it to her grandmother. "There's just a certain way I know things can be done. The church doesn't want to take the shortcuts I show them, even though—trust me—EVERYONE else saves themselves money that way."

"Baby," Gran-gran said, "I love you, but that sounds like some shady dealings in my book."

Jakiesha couldn't keep up her excuses to her grandmother. God changed her heart. She and her grandmother prayed for forgiveness.

After prayer, Jakiesha told her grandmother, "God has forgiven me and restored me in right relationship with Him. He is a God of justice and mercy and I am a recipient. I'm going to apologize to Pastor Fred and to the entire congregation."

After speaking with Pastor Fred, he told her, "We thank God for answering our prayers. Now that we know you have repented, Jakiesha, we do need an accountant again."

After experiencing difficult challenges, being restored back to God, are you a witness to God's indescribable faithfulness?

Keep in Mind

"And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."

(Isaiah 49:23, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV **Isaiah 49:18** Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

20 The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost

my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?

22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

The People, Places, and Times

The Progeny Blessing. Having children as heirs to continue the covenant people of God has always been a major theme of God's story with humanity. Scholars call this aspect of God's promise to His people the "progeny blessing." When Abram first arrived in Canaan, God promised to give the land to his descendants, even though at the time, he was 75 years old and had no heir. Later, God again promises Abram an heir of his own flesh and blood, and as many descendants as stars in the sky (Genesis 15:4–5). By the time Abram is 99 years old, he has fathered a son who will indeed become a great nation, but God makes a further promise. Abram will be the father of many nations, and is renamed Abraham. Sarai is renamed Sarah, and named as the one who will mother the child of God's covenant with Abraham. Isaac fulfills this promise. Isaac and Rebekah struggle for many years to have children before God blesses them with twins. The elder son, Esau, fathers his own nation, and the younger son, Jacob, ends

up with four wives. For a time, the favored wife Rachel is concerned that she will not bear, and though she does give birth to two sons, she dies in bearing the second. This gives Jacob a total of 12 sons, who each have multiple children themselves. The nation of Israel blossoms from this point.

The rollercoaster drama of the difficulty of conceiving, bearing, and raising one (let alone many) children is a constant narrative thread from Genesis 12 through chapter 30. It continues to play a large role in later sacred stories of Samson's family, Hannah, Bathsheba, and others. Even in less drastic stories, children are always seen as a blessing from God. Throughout Scripture, Israel can judge if it is being blessed or not by how many children they are having.

In the pre-industrial age, more children meant more workers to help bring in food or trade to help the family survive. Children were their parents' only financial safety net in old age. In an economic system like this, losing

one's children was financially devastating, in addition to being heartbreaking. This is why it is a major theme in the prophecies of returning from exile that they will have many children.

Background

God's people were in captivity because they were obstinate and stubborn (Isaiah 48:4). He told Israel if they disobeyed, He would scatter them. Then He would restore them back (Deuteronomy 30:1–3). God placed His people in a place of affliction (Isaiah 48:10). Through Isaiah, God is speaking to His people with comfort and mercy (Isaiah 48:20; 49:13). He says, "All things begin and end with me" (Isaiah 48:12).

God declares to His people they should flee from the Chaldeans (Isaiah 48:20). This was similar to the charge given their ancestors who had fled from Egypt while depending on God to sustain them (Isaiah 48:21). God's people are given the promise to be released, restored, and prosperous once again. God's people are promised a temporary freedom from their earthly captivity and a permanent freedom through Jesus Christ from captivity of sin. Restoration will be given on the day of salvation. This is in reference to Christ's kingdom when God's people will be restored and prosper (Isaiah 48:8-9).

At-A-Glance

1. Promise of Restoration (Isaiah 49:18-20)
2. Questioning Restoration (v. 21)
3. Confirming Restoration and Prosperity (vv. 22-23)

In Depth

1. Promise of Restoration (Isaiah 49:18–20)

Look all around and see all the people gathering back to the Lord. They are the children of the people of captivity. Coming from many different places to meet in one place, they will make one body and join themselves to glorify God. These words spoken during the exile were intended to encourage God's people. He implies that the land of Judea was lying in waste during the Babylonian captivity. "Thy land of destruction" contrasts with what was to come.

The increase of people will be so great in number. This will come after many have been killed in wars and died in captivity in a faraway land. There will be a great increase as if these children had been given to a widowed mother.

The added people would be a blessing and strength as an ornament to God's people. The Lord wanted to assure them of His commitment to what He was saying. "As I live, saith the LORD" was a solemn promise between God and His people. The bride, wearing fancy jewelry, indicated these children will portray beauty and glorify the Lord.

Likewise, when the people of God were in a wasted, desolate, and unproductive state, there manifested the Savior of the world, the introduction of the Gospel, and the transformation of the Gentiles.

How do we see God fulfilling this kind of restoration throughout salvation history?

2. Questioning Restoration (v. 21)

This describes the great increase of the true people of God. The image given is of a mother who had been robbed of her children and made a widow. She had seen the devastation of ruin that was spread all around her. She felt alone. Then all of sudden the mother sees herself completely surrounded with more children than she lost. She is home and blessed by the happy

family that surrounds her. Then the mother asks, “Who hath begotten me these?” She wants to know where they had been. God’s restoration would be beyond what we could hope for.

Why does God choose the image of children to illustrate the overflowing blessing of restoration He has in store?

3. Confirming Restoration and Prosperity (vv. 22–23)

God will call His people to Himself, like a general calling the troops together. He will set the standard for His people. Those that God has adopted as His own and those that claim Him for their Father will be in His arms. Those He adopts will be given great care, devotion, and loving-kindness, as a nurse would care for babies. The daughters will be carried as a sick and weak person might be carried. Nonbelievers will give to the increase, protection, and maintenance of these children. Even those in high positions such as kings and queens will have a heartfelt love and caring concern toward God’s people.

How does God use non-Christians to aid His Church today?

Search the Scriptures

1. What shall cause the desolate places to become too small (Isaiah 49:19)?
2. Who can ask for another place to dwell (v. 20)?
3. When kings and queens become nursing fathers and mothers to God’s people, what shall they know (v. 23)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. God restores and prospers His people. Should His people do anything to help secure their prosperity?
2. When God grants restoration, what is our responsibility? How do we show our gratitude? How do we maintain our blessings?

Liberating Lesson

Today, there are many people who need to be restored to God because of sin. Who can restore us? Jesus will lift us up when we feel neglected, abandoned, and bereaved. God restored Israel; He will also restore us. He will give us freedom when we’re enslaved by our own choices and disobedience. Jesus is waiting to restore us so that we can have a relationship with God. We must repent, pray, and wait on the restoration of the Lord! We must depend on God’s promises to bring the Gentiles and His people together into one people of God through Jesus Christ.

Application for Activation

This week think of how you can overcome discouragement from the enemy who creeps into your peace. Ask God to restore you to Himself when you have allowed the enemy to take your joy. Remember that Jesus Christ has come to redeem you and wants you to have the right relationship with Him and others. He’s coming back!

Think of what you can do to restore a broken friendship with a family member or a friend who you consider to be your enemy. Ask yourself, “Am I the enemy?” What should you do to become a better Christian?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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Say It Correctly

Nebuchadnezzar. neh-buh-kad-NEZZ-zer.
Zedekiah. zeh-deh-KIE-uh.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God Puts Down and Lifts Up
(Psalm 75)

TUESDAY

God Protects a Restored, Holy People
(Leviticus 26:3–13)

WEDNESDAY

Blessings upon God's People
(Luke 6:20–26)

THURSDAY

God Has Turned Mourning into Dancing
(Psalm 30)

FRIDAY

God Gives Good Gifts
(James 1:13–18)

SATURDAY

Blessings for Obedience
(Deuteronomy 28:9–14)

SUNDAY

Wait for the Lord
(Isaiah 49:18–23)

Notes

God Offers Deliverance

Bible Background • ISAIAH 51

Printed Text • ISAIAH 51:1–8 | Devotional Reading • 2 THESSALONIANS 3:1–4

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXAMINE Isaiah’s example of God’s rich faithfulness in Israel’s spiritual history, TRUST God even when others speak disparagingly about our faith, and SHARE the goodness and deliverance of God with others.

In Focus

Kaylynn had been incarcerated for a crime he did not commit. He believed the day would come when God would clear his name and he would be delivered from his bondage. He held close to the words found in Isaiah, “The Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be put to shame, He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me!” (Isaiah 50:7–9).

He trusted God. He had gotten into some situations in the past, being accused falsely and misjudged, and God delivered him every time.

But, this time, the setup led to his imprisonment. His friends and associates felt sorry for him. But they didn’t believe Kaylynn would get out of this one easily and they told him to plead guilty and he would get a lesser charge. Kaylynn stood his ground and said, “How can I confess to what I have not done? God has never failed me and neither will He this time.”

Kaylynn was given the maximum sentence of 20 years without a chance of parole.

That was two years ago. Today he was preparing to leave prison. All charges had been dropped. He was exonerated. As he was singing and praising God, Paul and Silas’s jail experience came to mind. After their release they told the brethren all about it. Kaylynn could hardly wait to meet up with his former friends and associates to share with them how God delivered him out of prison.

When we are in a jam and things don’t look good, do we still keep the faith? Do we still believe and hope in God to deliver us?

Keep in Mind

“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”
(Isaiah 51:1, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV **Isaiah 51:1** Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

4 Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people.

5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the

people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

The People, Places, and Times

Abraham and Sarah. Abraham did not always follow God's plan as God had intended. On occasion, he and Sarah both seemed to have an urge to give God a helping hand. At other times, the two acted out of cowardice, not out of faith in the God who called them.

From the time of his call, Abraham had no knowledge of where he would be going. He stepped out on the word of God. He never stopped believing in God's purpose, even when it seemed that everything was working against him.

Eden. The name Eden is derived either from the Hebrew root word meaning "to be fruitful, plentiful" or from a Sumerian word meaning "steppe, flatland." After creating the entire universe, God consecrated the particular garden called Eden as a place of paradise and

worship. He placed His newly created human beings to care for it, and communed with them there. There was still work to do to care for Eden, but no weeds or thorns to make the work especially hard. Many prophecies of the end times pull on images of Eden to indicate that God will heal the world so completely as to restore the paradise we knew before the Fall.

Background

Even though the Israelites are worried that foreign countries will conquer them, God reassures His people He is willing, able, and capable of providing for their release from their captives. In Isaiah 50, the one who is responsible for delivering this message of hope shows he has been commissioned by God and he is ready to carry out his mission, God's message, out to the fullest (Isaiah 50:4-5).

Jesus also fulfilled this prophecy when He was commissioned by God and carried out His duties in securing salvation for mankind to the fullest. Some Jews rejected Jesus as Christ on their own accord. We make a choice to accept what God offers. In Isaiah's message, the people of God are encouraged to trust in Him, while sinners are discouraged not to trust in themselves (Isaiah 50:11).

At-A-Glance

1. The Offer of Deliverance (Isaiah 51:1-3)
2. The Way to Deliverance (vv. 4-6)
3. An Everlasting Deliverance (vv. 7-8)

In Depth

1. The Offer of Deliverance (Isaiah 51:1-3)

This conversation is to those who follow after righteousness, seriously yearning to practically obey God's law. They are told, "Listen to Me!" God is making them an offer of deliverance. God's people are seeking Him because they want His favor brought back to them.

They are told to look back to Abraham and Sarah. You are Sarah's daughters, if you strive for righteousness. To encourage the captives in Babylon, God calls them to remember when and how He called Abraham by His Word He blessed and increased him. They, too, were very small in number, but the Lord has promised to increase them also (Isaiah 49:19).

The Lord shall comfort Zion: God will restore it from despair. He will make them happy—giving them hearts that are glad. Their gladness will lead to their satisfaction making them thankful to God. They will sing from their hearts songs of joy and thanksgiving unto their God.

What role models of righteousness do you identify in your life?

2. The Way to Deliverance (vv. 4-6)

God is speaking to a specific group, His people. This isn't for everyone. This is for the people of God. The ones who have the law of God within them. In addition to knowing what is right, God's people do what is right. God wants His people to listen and be attentive. He wants His people to adhere to what He is saying and take notes on their hearts.

God's righteousness is near; He will soon come to their rescue. Those that He has made promises to will see the fulfillment of those promises. God's arms will judge the people, because He has the power to judge all. He has the ability to draw them together, and He has the ability to scatter them. They should put their trust in Him.

Heaven and earth are going to pass away (Matthew 24:35). The description here is the heavens will disappear like a vapor, or smoke, into thin air. The earth will fall off like an old piece of clothing no one wants to wear. Just as the earth and the heavens will no longer exist, this will be true of people. In contrast, the way to deliverance, salvation and righteousness will remain.

How do you remind yourself to chase after eternal things, rather than passing earthly things?

3. An Everlasting Deliverance (vv. 7-8)

Isaiah is requesting the attention of the righteous, God's people, the keepers of the Law. God's people are told to not fear the rebuke and criticism of men. We have the assurance of God's promises. Others might say anything to attempt to destroy our faith in God, but God has given His promise. He will not turn back on His Word. God is faithful.

People will become food for the insects and animals when they die. As time goes on, those same people won't be around to express disapproval. In contrast, the salvation and righteous of God will always be. Salvation

and righteousness will continue to exist, from generation to generation, forever.

What would you be able to do for God if you weren't afraid of others' scorn?

Search the Scriptures

1. Is God offering deliverance to all (Isaiah 51:1)?
2. Who shall comfort the people of Zion (v. 3)?
3. Who are they that know righteousness (v. 6)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. God shows He is willing and able to deliver us from our captivity, which is sin. But He does not force us to accept His offer. Should He or should He not? Why?

2. God tells His people, "hearken unto me" three times. When something is told to us repeatedly should we consider it? Should we pay more attention to what's being said or should we find the person to be a nuisance trying to force us to accept what they are saying?

Liberating Lesson

In spite of what we see, we must remember God is faithful and He will deliver us, just as He did the remnant of Israel. He encourages us to listen to Him and to look back at what He did for Abraham and Sarah. Abraham believed God and became a great nation, we too must believe God and trust Him. God comforts and consoles us as we fear Him. If we are faithful, God will deliver us. We must be willing to tell others that God's Word will last forever. We should encourage others to trust Jesus for deliverance and salvation.

Application for Activation

This week, pray and trust God daily to deliver you from any situation that will cause you not to demonstrate your faith in God. Do not let anyone discourage you from believing

that God can deliver you from those that speak negatively. You can ask God to speak to your heart so the Holy Spirit will remind you that God is faithful and He will deliver you.

Ask God to help you encourage others because Jesus loves you and wants everyone to be saved. Tell others that those who reject the Lord will be judged by God, not man.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

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Say It Correctly

Hearken. HAR-ken.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God Will Vindicate His Servant
(Isaiah 50:4–9)

TUESDAY

Remember God's Mighty Deeds
(Isaiah 51:9–16)

WEDNESDAY

God Defends Israel's Cause
(Isaiah 51:17–23)

THURSDAY

God Rescues Us from Peril
(2 Corinthians 1:7–14)

FRIDAY

Jesus Rescues Us from Wrath
(1 Thessalonians 1:6–10)

SATURDAY

Deliverance Belongs to the Lord
(Psalm 3)

SUNDAY

God's Deliverance Is Coming
(Isaiah 51:1–8)

Notes
