

SEPTEMBER 22

Today we are beginning Ephesians and entering into the second part of Isaiah. This part of Isaiah is filled with some amazing verses and, of course, great chapters like Isaiah 53 and 55; both of which are worth memorizing. In fact, Ephesians 1-3 are good memorization material too.

Isaiah 39-41:16

Isaiah 39

I believe these guys came after the humbling of Assyria. We have seen that Hezekiah showed them everything. There might be a thought that Hezekiah should have had nothing to show them; because he had sent tons of gold, silver, and anything that wasn't nailed down, to Assyria to keep them from attacking. Of course that didn't work, and God told them it wouldn't. But after God destroyed the Assyrian army, their camp was full of loot they had taken from everyone else, and there would have been tons of precious metals there too. I'm sure Hezekiah got some of that. In essence, what Hezekiah was showing them had been a gift from God. It was nothing that Hezekiah had earned or had reason to glory in. But he did.

Vs. 5-7 There is no expressed condemnation of Hezekiah, but it is implied.

V. 8 This does not have a complimentary ring to it. This judgment was about 100 years away, so why get so worked up? We could understand Hezekiah. Would you get worked up about something that will happen in 100 years from now? But because of this attitude, Hezekiah had a hand in bringing the nation under that judgment.

Here is the view of what Hezekiah did from God's perspective:

2 Chronicles 32:24-25 In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death, and he prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign. ²⁵But Hezekiah did not make return according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and Judah and Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles 32:31 And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.

All of the kings faltered when they found success, but the way they faltered was specifically unique to each king. They showed a weakness and unwillingness to fully trust God in some area of their lives. With Hezekiah, I have to believe that it began when he thought he was going to die. The attack by the Assyrians was bad, but Hezekiah stood. Hezekiah got sick and he wept bitterly. After this, even with God saving him, his heart was not fully the Lord's. Hey, nothing would happen for 100 years. Hezekiah would be long gone. But in those extra 15 years that God gave him, Hezekiah had a son, Manasseh, who was the worst and most godless king of Israel, and who is credited by tradition, for putting Isaiah to death.

For us the warning here is obvious. Some of us are like a rock in some areas; but it is our anger, or worry, or our sexual needs, or our need to be secure or to be liked, to be financially comfortable, that can shred our faith and get us irrationally focused on ourselves. Some unexpected scare or attraction or frustration can enter our lives, and suddenly we're faced with a temptation that could erase all the faith and devotion for God we have shown over the past years. This story is a warning to us from God.

We need to be in the Word every day, washing ourselves, refreshing our faith and trust. More specifically, the Word focuses us on our Lord, our mission, and our life of following Him through this harvest, glorifying the Father until we are home. This world is not our home, and neither is this particular body.

Isaiah 40

Now with chapters 38 & 39, particularly 39, we have the Babylonian exile clearly stated. Exile meant the extermination of a people. People were forced to worship other gods, speak another language, take new names; and they were removed from their land and culture. Most nations taken into exile never recovered. Judah would not only survive, but thrive because of God. So now, in the shadow of this dark threat of death to the nation, God breaks out with some of the brightest and most magnificent declarations of hope and restoration ever given to man. Isaiah 53, located in the middle of these 27 chapters, is stirring, and something every disciple should memorize. I wish I had done this sooner.

Get ready to meet some very well-known verses.

Vs. 1-2 The strength of this declaration is in proportion to what Israel has suffered on this planet since the time God formed them. Israel has been an object lesson and they have represented mankind.

Notice that Jerusalem is mentioned.

Vs. 3-5 The context here is the same in the NT regarding John the Baptist. The Deliverer and King was coming.

Vs. 6-8 A warning to all mankind. And our hope: *The Word of our God will stand forever.* Amen. It is vital to know the Word of the Lord and let it wash you daily.

Vs. 9-11 The King is coming in His kingdom. If you look at the gospel that John, Jesus and the Twelve preached, this is it.

Vs. 12-20 This section is about this king and is organized around the question of who He is.

V. 13 Paul quotes this in Romans 11.

Vs. 19-20 We will see this description of making an idol repeated. The process itself, dependent on man, shows how insane it is to worship an idol of any kind. Particularly funny is the need to nail it down so it won't fall.

Vs. 21-26 Here, in the 3rd and 1st person, God declares who He is.

Vs. 27-31 In light of who God is, Jacob-Israel (the unified people of Israel) can trust that the Lord will deliver and restore them. He will give them strength as they wait to return from Babylon and as they wait for the Messiah during the Tribulation.

Vs. 29-31 are some amazing verses and, if you have time, they are worth memorizing.

Isaiah 41:1-16

Vs. 1-7 are a warning to the nations that nothing will stand in God's way or stop His predetermined plan.

V. 4 This is what Jesus says three times in the book of Revelation. Linking this declaration with v. 2, the world should understand that they are defenseless in their rebellion to stop the Lord. The proper response would be to turn to the Lord and submit.

Vs. 8-16 In these verses you get an idea of how God has used Israel as a servant, and how He will use them in the future. Their failure has been an example to all of mankind, and as they represent the redemptive purpose of God in the world, they have been the object of human and spiritual hatred. These are absolutely great verses.

V. 10 This is another one that is good to memorize.

V. 16 Just as the Assyrians smashed themselves against Jerusalem - in the Tribulation, the world will smash themselves, fighting against God's people. When the Lord returns, Israel will rejoice and glory in their Messiah and His kingdom.

Ephesians 1

Ephesians is a great letter. After Galatians, where grace was mentioned as being so important, in Ephesians grace is painted for us in the person of our Lord. God's love, kindness and delight in those who know Him is described, so that by the time you get to chapters 4-6, you just know that obeying and following are the only logical things to do since He loves us with such reckless abandon. So, let's go. I would suggest reading this slowly and trying to drink this chapter in. Speaking of which, a good latte wouldn't hurt either.

Vs. 1-2 We often see Paul stating that it was God's fault, I mean His will, that made Paul an apostle. In some places this came to Paul's defense. In this letter we'll see that Paul never got over the wonder of being chosen to be used like this. Apparently it was noted after Paul wrote this letter that it was sent to Ephesus and the words, *To...in Ephesus* were added. It was probably the case that churches had sprung up around Ephesus after Paul's years of ministry there, and this letter was meant to circulate around this area. It seems like some of the recipients of this letter hadn't met Paul. This letter was written from Rome during the time of Acts 28, and before he wrote 1 Timothy.

By the way, vs. 3-14 are all one sentence. Read it slowly and enjoy. Notice the phrase *in the heavenly places*. We'll see this again. Also, see if you can find the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in this entire process.

Vs. 15-16 *For this reason*. What reason? Why is Paul saying this? How does this connect with what he has just said? This is a hinge verse, swinging from what Paul has just said, and going into the prayer. Because this is true of them and they have received this, Paul as a maker of disciples is praying for their deepening in this new life of blessing and privilege.

Vs. 17-23 is Paul's prayer for them. It is the first of two great prayers in Ephesians. Think slowly through what Paul is asking for them, realizing it is what God wants for you too. Notice that this is personal growth in Christ that is dependent on our following as disciples. Salvation and new life in Christ is in 3-14, but the next steps of growth are in these verses.

Notice that vs. 20-23 read like Jesus' prelude to the Great Commission. *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matt. 28:18-20)

All of this is not only what God has done for us personally, but there is a great emphasis on the church. Someone has said that Ephesians is not about "me and my God," but rather about "us and our God." Those famous verses in Ephesians 4:12-16 are dependent on all of us growing together in Christ and working together in the harvest. Paul, in Ephesians, describes how glorious the church is because of God's plan of redemption and Christ's blood in saving us to be His church.

Psalm 66

This psalm doesn't say who wrote it, but I did notice a couple things that reminded me of David. Notice in vs. 17-20 that the writer, himself, cried out and experienced deliverance. This would lead me to think it was David.

Vs. 1-4 This call to all nations is very typical of David. Whoever wrote this understood that all of what God was doing through Israel was meant to bring the world to worship God. I was reading about Jesus' second cleansing of the temple the week He died in Mark 11:17, *And he was*

teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

Vs. 5-7 This describes something the Lord had done, some great deliverance that showed that the nations were silly to rebel against God. This event could have been the destruction of the Assyrian army, or it could have been some great victory God gave to David after he became king of the entire nation. But Israel was always to have been reviewing and remembering God's deliverance as He led them out of Egypt. The writer seems to be referring to God's power in making a way through the Red Sea. The nation should remember that God can do the impossible to rescue His people.

Vs. 8-12 All nations are called upon to bless God because of His grace and deliverance. Coming to God, God would extend to them the same salvation. Yet, as you read this, it was a wild ride until God delivered them. They had to hang on, hoping in the Lord and waiting for Him.

V. 9 Do you notice how often David talks about God setting our feet upon a rock and giving us firm footing. In the wilderness, on the side of hills and mountains, broken rock and dirt made for treacherous footing. David must have seen instability in walking as a symbol of this time of his life.

Vs. 13-15 Again, this sounds like David. His desire was to live in God's presence; and once he became king, his only desire was to bring the ark to Jerusalem, to set it in the tabernacle and to fulfill all that he had spoken to God in those years of living on the run.

Vs. 16-20 Since this is written in the first person, telling personally of what God did for him, I really think this is David. Here again is the testimony to all of God's deliverance and David's claim of knowing the *steadfast love* of the Lord.

Proverbs 23:25-28

Vs. 25-26 These are God's words to heed your "godly" parents. They don't have it all wrong.

Vs. 27-28 This is very similar to what Solomon wrote at the beginning of Proverbs. The *pit* and the *well* might have some double meanings, but the main idea is getting caught and being unable to save yourself.

You wouldn't get any of this advice from evening TV or our movies, but we still know this reality in our hearts. Even in the secular world, politicians and leaders who are caught with a prostitute or caught in adultery are not looked upon graciously. Written in our hearts is still the manufacturer's design that one man should love one woman in marriage forever.