

FPFWC Christian Development



God Delivers and Restores

June 2022

Summer Quarter

June 18, 2022

Lesson #3 – God’s People Shall Prosper

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Isaiah 49:18-23

ICE BREAKERS-

1. *How would you encourage someone who is going through a time of spiritual darkness or drought?*
2. *How might Isaiah 49:20 encourage a church that appears to be declining?*
3. *What do we gain by learning to wait on God?*

Key Verse: Thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.—Isaiah 49:23

LESSON BACKGROUND –

The previous lesson ended with Isaiah 49:13, and great joy was predicted to be expressed (compare Isaiah 51:3). Gentiles in all directions would rejoice as the Lord comforted His people. Five verses later is where this study begins.

Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bear a son (Isaiah 7:14). That passage is cited in Matthew 1:22–23 as fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. The fulfillment was 700 years away. That same child would grow up to fulfill many other prophecies of Isaiah, not least the prophetic expectations linked to a person referred to as the suffering servant. Our text comes from the second Servant Song, the same discussed last week (see lesson 2 Lesson Context). The servant is the one who is the speaker for the text of this lesson. The servant is understood to be the Son of God. Some have suggested that the speaker is Isaiah, but the context indicates that the speaker is more than a prophet.

The mood changed from exuberance (Isaiah 49:1–13; see lesson 2) to a lamentation that the Lord had forgotten His people and Jerusalem. It is easy to imagine Jerusalem stating that God had forgotten the city and the people (see lesson 1 Lesson Context). Metaphorically, Jerusalem sat in the dust wearing torn clothes or sackcloth and ashes, head bowed with sorrow and hopelessness (compare Lamentations 2:10).

The Lord asked rhetorically whether a woman can forget the child she gave birth to and nursed (Isaiah 49:15). Though an unhealthy mother might forget that child, even a mediocre mother cannot. In the same way, the Lord could not forget the people or Zion. To show His attention He assured Zion that the ones who had mistreated His people by taking them away were leaving. This provided opportunity for God’s children to hurry to return (49:14–17).

God had promised a return, and He also said that Jerusalem and the cities of Judah would be rebuilt (Isaiah 44:26). At least some of the people in captivity were aware of the passages in Isaiah about a deliverer named Cyrus, and that the captivity would last about 70 years (Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10). It is definite that Daniel was aware of the prophecy of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2).

LESSON COMMENTARY

God will not only remember, but He will also fully restore Israel. Zion will experience an influx of people as the sons of Jerusalem return and those who destroyed the city will leave it (v. 17). The sons will be like ornate jewels on a bride for the city of Zion, marking a reversal of fortune for the city (v. 19). The city that was once abandoned will now be bursting at the seams to the point that Zion will be confused about where all the people have come from (vv. 19–21). This is referring to the restoration of Zion in the millennial kingdom, not to the return from Babylon.

The Lord reassured Israel not only with the promise that He would remember and restore Israel, but also that He would ultimately exalt Israel. The repopulation of the city will be assisted by the Gentiles (v. 22). The nations will serve the sons and daughters of Zion. They will care for Israel and **bow down** in humility before the people of Israel (v. 23). When these things take place, the people of Israel will recognize that their hope in the Lord has not disappointed. The ferocity of Israel's enemies makes no difference to the Lord (vv. 24–25). He will rescue Israel from those who **contend** with them. The defeat of Zion's enemies will be brutal. The reference to Zion's enemies eating **their own flesh** and being **drunk with their own blood** (v. 26) may be a reference to radical siege warfare in which the enemy is starved out to the point that they resort to cannibalism. It could also suggest, as Oswalt argues, that without anyone for them to attack "the bloodthirstiness of the oppressors becomes so strong that ... [the oppressed] must turn on themselves" (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 314). Whatever the reference, this behavior marks the moment in which all humanity recognizes that God is Lord, the **Redeemer** of Israel.

LESSON NUGGET – The Lord assures His people of His love by comparing Himself to a compassionate mother. The Bible emphasizes the fatherhood of God, but God's nature also has a "motherhood" side that we must not forget. God is compassionate, and He comforts us as a mother comforts her children (66:13). Isaiah pictures Israel as a nursing child, totally dependent on the Lord, who will never forget them or forsake them.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*