

## ***FPFWC Christian Development***



### **God's Promises**

January 2023

Winter Quarter

**January 14, 2023**

**Lesson #2 – God Promises to Guide**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Isaiah 48:3-8a, 17

**ICE BREAKER** –

1. Why should we make every effort to avoid stubbornness?
2. When you think of God’s Mercy what comes to mind?

***Key Verse: “Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.”—Isaiah 48:17***

**LESSON BACKGROUND**

As we noted last week, the Babylonians had taken full control of the southern kingdom of the Israelites, called Judah, by 586 BC. The temple was destroyed, its vessels were confiscated, and many people were deported to Babylon. That was about 136 years after Assyria had done the same to the northern kingdom, called Israel.

The various sections of the book of Isaiah are unified by their repeating of important themes about the Lord and His relationship to Israel. One such section that refers to the “servant” of the Lord is often recognized as Isaiah 40–55. Beyond seeing the role of the Lord’s servant (sometimes understood to be the nation of Israel, sometimes as an individual to come), the reader of this section will notice some consistent messages.

First, Isaiah points out the absurdity of worshipping idols (example: Isaiah 41:22–24). The idolater takes a piece of wood, uses part of it to make a fire and bake bread. And then with the rest of the wood he makes a “god” that he worships (44:14–17)! Second and closely related to the first, Isaiah emphasizes that there is no other God but the Lord (44:6; 45:6).

Third, Isaiah frequently notes the Lord’s knowledge and control of the future. He knows the “end from the beginning” and “will do all [His] pleasure” (Isaiah 46:10). Furthermore, the Lord challenges the false gods to match Him by revealing the future (41:22; 43:9; 44:7; 45:21; 48:14).

Fourth, the role of the Lord as the Creator of all things is also prominent (Isaiah 40:28). God laid the earth’s foundation and stretched out the heavens above (48:13; 51:13). Included in His activity is the creation of the nation of Israel (43:15), often expressed as childbirth (example: 66:7–13).

**LESSON COMMENTARY**

Verse 3 returns to the recurring claim that God foretells and controls the course of history. This control is evident in his announcement of **former things** that have come to pass. In this context, God’s ability to predict future events is not designed

as a comment on God's omniscience, but a statement of His sovereign mastery over His creation. God reveals the way that things will come to pass despite the stiff **neck** and bronze **forehead** of the Israelites (v. 4). The image of the stiff **neck** is used several times in the OT in relation to Israel (cf. Ex 32:9; Dt 9:6, 13; Ps 75:5). The stubbornness of the nation has been a perennial problem for Israel despite God's actions on the nation's behalf and His prediction of the events that have come to pass.

God gives two reasons for His predictions of the return from Babylon. The first reason God announces these events beforehand is so that Israel will not credit their idols for deliverance from Babylon (v. 5). Only the God in control of history could foretell an event like the return from captivity. Had God not predicted this, Israel might be tempted to give their idols credit. The word of the Lord continues to be confirmed in the fall of Babylon and, ultimately, in the ingathering of Israel. The evidence is clear. All Israel needs to do is affirm its truthfulness (v. 6). God, however, is not finished declaring what is to come. He will prophesy new things and hidden things to Israel (v. 6).

The second reason God gives prophecies of the return from captivity (**new things**, v. 6) is so Israel could not boast that they knew of this all along (v. 8). Oswalt suggests, "Just as prophecy was given so as to refute the claims of idols, so not all prophecy was given at once in order to refute the claims of human omniscience" (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 268).

Now God declares not only why He predicted the restoration from captivity, but also why He would even bring Israel back at all. Despite the nation's rebellion against God (v. 8b), Israel has been spared because of God's concern for His own reputation (v. 9). Instead of destroying Israel, God has chosen to refine and test the nation through affliction. Refinement through affliction is a common occurrence throughout the OT (cf. Ps 66:10; Jr 9:7; Zch 13:9; Mal 3:3).

This Servant-Messenger reminds Israel of the need to obey God's counsel. The message offered emphasizes that God offers Israel wisdom (v. 17). If Israel had taken God's counsel to heart, they would have experienced peace and righteousness (v. 18).

**LESSON NUGGET** – When you end up in trouble because you did not listen to sound advice, the last thing you want to hear is somebody saying, "I told you so!" But that is just what God says to Israel in this chapter. He had warned them that their sins would bring judgment, but they hardened their necks and closed their ears. It was time to repent and seek forgiveness.

God declares new things and does new things, and His people can hear new things (v.6). As you obey God, He leads you, gives you peace, and meets your needs. No matter how weak you are, you can lean on Him.

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