

I Will Do All My Pleasure

Bel and Nebo, idol-gods of Babylon, are depicted by Isaiah as bowing down to Cyrus and the Persian army before being broken in pieces and carted off in ox-drawn wagons. Their destruction is symbolic of the overthrow of the Babylonian empire by Cyrus. Inserting these named gods for the Babylonian king and his people serves to emphasize the futility of idolatry. Far from delivering the nation as the worshippers might hope, the gods ‘themselves are gone into captivity’.

‘Unto you first ...’

We remind ourselves Isaiah’s words are directed primarily to the Lord’s believing people among the Jews. The prophet’s message is designed to *inform*, by foretelling what will surely come to pass, and *comfort*, by assuring the elect that the events are according to God’s will. All outcomes are arranged for God’s glory and the blessing of His people. Judah will succumb to Babylon, Jerusalem will fall, the nation, including the remnant believers, will go into exile with much hardship and pain. Yet, it all serves God’s will and His purpose.

From the cradle to the grave

The Lord calls His believing people to listen carefully as He sets out the dimensions of His ongoing care and protection for His beloved people. God’s elect, then and now, are cradled in the hands of God from birth to old age. Our whole lives are lived under His watchful eye. We are made, borne, carried and delivered by the active hand of our Lord and Saviour who preserves our bodies and saves our souls. He even has a special word for the aged among us. ‘Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.’

The everlasting arms

Isaiah speaks for God as he asks, ‘To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?’ This, of course, is an argument against idol-worship but it reminds the Lord’s people how unique is our Lord Jesus Christ and how exclusive His way of salvation. We are loved, saved, tended and delivered by our incomparable Messiah, the Christ of God. Men make their idol-gods of gold and carry them in their arms. God makes His people blessed in Christ and bears us in His arms.

An earnest of inheritance

In verses 9 and 10 the Lord calls His people to remember His faithfulness in past times as a pledge and token of His future promises. This blessed prompt will ward off anxiety and fear. Israel should remember their history when God previously intervened to help and deliver them from trouble. All God’s elect have a personal story of provision, protection and divine intervention. God’s past mercies are instalments of yet more and better to come and will culminate in our eternal glory.

‘All my pleasure’

Prophecy is not a mere curiosity. God is omniscient and omnipotent. He, and only He, can tell the future because He alone orders and determines the end of all things from their beginning. He powerfully manages everything to its predetermined and predestined conclusion. Furthermore, the Lord informs us that all things subsist and come to pass according to His will. ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.’ Such statements anger and offend the unregenerate but gladden and reassure God’s redeemed people. This was so for the Old Testament remnant who saw the fulfilment of God’s word in the rise of Cyrus who was raised up to do God’s will.

Grace freely given

The ‘stout-hearted’ spoken of at the end of the chapter are those whose hearts are closed and dull to God’s word and ways. They have no knowledge of spiritual truth and no righteousness in God’s eyes. By nature all men and women are in this condition but in the gospel age, under the rule of the Messiah Jesus, righteousness will be brought near to sinners and placed to the account of those such as Lydia whose hearts are opened. In the gospel, righteousness is near at hand, it is not far off. Christ’s coming and God’s plan of salvation did not tarry but was ‘brought near’ in the Incarnation. Salvation is enjoyed in Zion, Christ’s church, for His own glory and for the everlasting benefit and happiness of God’s spiritual Israel.

Our salvation is sure

Once again, the gospel age is foreseen by Isaiah with righteousness for sinners and justification of God's elect anticipated in the coming of Jesus Christ. The things Isaiah's age looked forward to have come to pass. Christ the Redeemer has come among men. The Lord's council stands. God has given salvation to His people according to His own good pleasure.

Amen

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