

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #65

Isaiah 44:21-28

In a world filled with idolatry and foolish people who worship idols, God wants His people remembering certain things about Him. The things God wants His people to remember are true and important.

In this context, there are three memories God's people need to have:

First of all God's people are to remember that God can foretell and control the future (44:6-8). **Second**, God's people are to remember that those who make idols and those who worship idols are nothing (44:9-20). **Third**, God's people are to remember how God is connected to His people.

Now when we carefully analyze these verses, we see that it is implied that Jerusalem would be destroyed (44:26) and a man named Cyrus would be instrumental in rebuilding both the city and the temple (44:28). **What this means is that when Israel had been taken captive, these are the things that God wanted His people to remember. In other words, these things are written so that God's people may be strengthened in their hearts when they face difficult setbacks and terrible troubles and trials.** The point Isaiah makes is this:

WHILE MY PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN AN IDOLATROUS WORLD AND ARE MADE TO FEEL LIKE THEY ARE WORTH NOTHING, GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE REMEMBERING THEIR CONNECTION TO GOD AND GOD'S CONNECTION TO EVERYTHING.

As John Calvin said, thinking about the things in this passage can strengthen your heart when you are facing "grievous calamities" (*Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 381).

In this text, there are eleven wonderful mental memories God wants His people to have that can strengthen your faith and spirit when you feel like you are worth nothing:

(Wonderful Memory #1) – You are My servant. 44:21b

This fact that Israel is God's "servant" is stated twice in this verse. There are several different Hebrew words (ama, naar, sifa, ebed) translated "servant" in the English language. The word "servant" here is ebed. This is a word used in a very significant theological way because it emphasizes one's very special and unique position in connection with God. In fact, this is the word that is used of Jesus Christ who is called the "Servant of the LORD" who would offer Himself as a sacrifice so that God could redeem His people (Isaiah 53:11). **When God uses this word servant (ebed) concerning His people, He is basically saying, I want you to remember that you are as special and as important to Me as My own Son, who bore your sins.**

No matter what you are facing right now, when you are in the family of God, this is a powerful and wonderful memory to have (*Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of OT & NT Words*, p. 632).

(Wonderful Memory #2) – I have formed you. **44:21c**

The Hebrew word “form” (yatsar) is one that specifically refers to God’s creative activity of designing, planning, framing, and ordaining something and then bringing it into existence and bringing to pass everything He has planned for that which He formed (*Ibid.*, p. 267).

God says to His people, when you find yourself in difficulties and trouble, you just remember this - I am sovereignly right there with you and I intend to bring to pass all of the wonderful promises I have made to you. God says to His people, you are My property.

Naturally, if His people walk in His ways they will receive His blessings, and if they do not they will receive some negative chastisements. But God’s people can always know they belong to God. He formed us. He called us. He predestined us. He saved us. He will deliver us.

(Wonderful Memory #3) – You will not be forgotten by God. **44:21d**

Although God’s people often forget about God and forget about their commitments to God, God never forgets His people and He never forgets the promises and commitments He has made to His people. When it comes to God’s Word and will, many of God’s own people slip into a spiritual Alzheimer’s or dementia in their memories. Not God. God never forgets His people, ever. He knows every one of them by name.

I want us all to think about this point. When you find yourself in your loneliest hour, remember you will never be forgotten by your God.

(Wonderful Memory #4) – God has wiped out all transgressions and sins. **44:22a**

There are some amazing words that we need to point out in this verse. First of all, the verb “wipe out” means to literally wipe something off or away (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 463). He paints the metaphorical picture of the transgressions and sins being like a thick cloud or heavy mist and He just wipes away the cloud or the mist so that it is gone.

The word “transgressions” is plural and is one that means every trespass in which one has turned away from the Word of God (*Ibid.*, p. 695). This refers to every instance where the Word of God said do this and His people didn’t do this, or every time His Word said don’t do this and His people did it anyway. The word “sins” is plural and refers to every time one has missed the mark of the perfect righteousness of God (*Ibid.*, p. 271).

Now here is what God is saying to His people. You have committed so many sins and transgressions against Me that it is like a thick cloud and mist that totally surrounds you. God says, I want you to know, I wipe away and wipe out every sin you have ever committed. When we find ourselves in difficulty, what a comforting thought; my sins are gone. G. Campbell Morgan said this is an amazing “declaration of grace” (*The Prophecies of Isaiah*, Vol. 2, p. 63). Who of us deserves this?

(Wonderful Memory #5) – God has redeemed His people. **44:22d**

God says I am your Redeemer and I have redeemed you. I have paid the price to make you Mine and the price I paid was My own Son.

Some interpreters think that this means Israel is to look back in time to the moment God redeemed her as a nation at the Exodus, and others believe that she is to look forward to the moment when God will redeem her forever. Both things are wonderful memories to have.

When you find yourself surrounded by difficulties, it is good to look back to the moment you believed on Jesus Christ, and it is also good to look forward to your redemptive future. You have been bought with a price by God, so God challenges His people to return to Him and glorify Him.

(Wonderful Memory #6) – When God redeems His people all of creation will rejoice. **44:23**

There are three different Hebrew words used for “joy” in this verse. The first word “joy” (gil) refers to a joy that is so happy that one physically expresses it with movement, like moving in a circle or jumping up and down (*Ibid.*, p. 169).

The second word “shout for joy” (rinnah) means that one is so joyful that they are loudly expressing it with their voices, like exuberant shouting (*Ibid.*, p. 771).

The third word “shout of joy” (rinnah pitsach) refers to a joy that is so happy that the mountains are physically making sounds by breaking to pieces (*Ibid.*, p. 685).

God wants His people thinking about the moment they will see in which all of creation will rejoice and sing because God has finally delivered Israel and His glory is displayed in all creation.

This verse clearly reinforces that all creation groans for the day when God has put Israel in her land. The reason all creation will rejoice is because God will show forth His glory in Israel’s land. This land will be seen like it has never been seen before.

We may not find much joy in what is presently happening in this world, but God’s people can always find joy in what will ultimately happen in this world. There will come a day when God’s glory will be seen everywhere. It will be seen in the earth, in the mountains, and in Israel.

There is coming a day when all creation will be singing a song of God’s redemption. The whole universe will be singing “Redeemed.”

(Wonderful Memory #7) – God alone is the Maker of all things. **44:24**

Do not miss what is said here - **God's people can find great strength and comfort in letting their minds think about the sovereignty of God. Our God, our Redeemer, our Creator, our Maker is in charge of all things. He is in charge of all things in the heavens and He is in charge of all things on this earth .**

The Hebrew word “maker” means that God is the creator of all things in the sense that He produces, constitutes and completes all things (*Ibid.*, pp. 657-658). God formed you from your mother's womb. He had His sovereign hand on you in creating you.

I don't need a science book or teacher to tell me I have been created by God. I don't need a science institute to tell me that God controls the heaven, or an archeologist to tell me God has been involved in what has happened on the earth. I have God's Word.

When we find ourselves in trouble, surrounded by trials and pressures, what a comforting truth to know - our God, the One who formed us and redeemed us is in sovereign control.

(Wonderful Memory #8) – God causes those false to be seen as foolish . **44:25**

God says I am the One who can make false prophets and false teachers and those demonic look like a bunch of fools. God says I make a joke out of astrologers and fortune-tellers and those who claim they can predict the future. God delights in taking some so-called “wise man” or “intellectual” and backing him into a corner so that he is seen as a total complete idiot.

I must say that I get a good laugh at a politician who goes around promoting global warming when most of the world is experiencing global cooling. It is hilarious to see these men making fools out of themselves. God loves to take these worldly “wise men” and show them to be fools. When some religious nut predicts a day when something is supposed to happen and it doesn't happen, God is showing the world He is God.

(Wonderful Memory #9) – God always confirms His Word for His people. **44:26**

The word “confirm” is in the Hiphil stem which means God will cause His Word to exist, stand and be raised up forever (*Ibid.*, p. 728). **God's people can always count on God's Word being confirmed and established forever because God will cause it always to be this way.**

Now one great illustration of this is that God would allow His people to be taken captive and then allow them to be released so that they could reinhabit Jerusalem. In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem and took many Israelis captive. In 539 B.C., Cyrus overtook Babylon (Daniel 5:30) and the very next year, he issued a decree that the Jews could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (II Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4).

God says to His people, you think about how I always literally fulfill My promises and My Word.

(Wonderful Memory #10) – God dries up the water to deliver His people. **44:27**

Two great episodes from Israel's history are referred to here - **First**, when He dried up the Red Sea so His people could escape; and **Second**, when He dried up the Jordan River so His people could enter the Promised Land. God is comforting His people by reminding them, I have power to take care of you when it looks like you have no hope. You may be backed into a corner, but remember you can turn to Me and I have the power to deliver you in any situation.

Israel still has some deep water to travel through and the Great Tribulation will be the time when she will be forced to turn to the Lord, just like at the Red Sea and the Jordan.

(Wonderful Memory #11) – God controls the future and He causes political leaders to carry out His will. **44:28**

God looks into the future and specifically names a pagan political leader, who wasn't even born yet, that He was going to bring into existence and ultimately use for His purposes to help His own people. The guy He would use would have a name, Cyrus, and we will see much about him next time.

Now God makes this prediction about 150 years before Cyrus was even born. Here God is not only predicting the future, He is demonstrating that He controls the future. Cyrus would be “His shepherd” used by God to help His people.

When you find yourself surrounded by negatives, let your mind think about these things. You belong to God. You have God's Word and promises. You have God's protection. One day you will be singing forever.

What is so tragic in the history of Israel is that in spite of all of these wonderful things God has done and will do for her, to this point she has no desire to know God, please God, or glorify God. God sent His own Redeemer to Israel so she could have all of the blessings of God and she would not accept Him.

God has sovereignly decreed that His redemptive plan be offered to us. He offers you all of His blessings in Jesus Christ. Will you come to Him? Will you believe on Him? Will you turn your life over to Him? If you will, your soul will sing for joy right here and right now!