

Session 4

GOD IS REDEEMER

Isaiah 44:21-24

Memory Verse

*Rejoice, heavens, for the Lord has acted;
shout, depths of the earth.*

*Break out into singing, mountains,
forest, and every tree in it.*

*For the Lord has redeemed Jacob,
and glorifies himself through Israel.*

– ISAIAH 44:23, CSB



God is Redeemer

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God is the chief and best of all beings. He is without beginning and end; and all things that exist find their origin in Him. Yet, the crown of His creation, human beings, have rebelled against God and refused to give Him glory.

? What is the most expensive piece of equipment you've bought for a sport or other hobby you enjoy?

? What has been your experience with breaking in new equipment? Why is it necessary to break in equipment for its proper use?

Imagine you spent a hundred dollars on a baseball glove for your son because he begged and begged for the top-of-the-line mitt. You decided to go ahead and splurge because he had played baseball for several seasons and you wanted to encourage his commitment and development as a player. However, at the first practice, you realize that your son is playing with his old glove. When you get home you go to his room and see that his new glove is neatly displayed on the top shelf of his bookcase. When you ask him about it, he says, "It's such a good glove, I don't want to get it dirty."

Of course, that doesn't make any sense. The glove was made to get dirty on the baseball diamond, fielding ground balls and pop flies. It is neither good nor right for it to stay on the shelf. Christians are like that baseball glove. They have been redeemed to give God glory by loving Him and doing what He commands. It is neither good nor right for them to go about their business and live as if there is no God. It makes no sense.

Session Summary

In this passage and throughout the Scriptures, God calls His people to a clear understanding of His glorious grace. Isaiah 44:21-24 is a potent summary of God's unmerited favor and unfathomable mercy to those on whom His favor rests. It also reveals God's purpose for His creation and redemption of people, namely His glory.

When we read the Scriptures, we must do so with care and right thinking. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God preserved for His people so that they might know the truth about themselves and God and so that they might be made wise unto salvation. However, the truth found therein does not automatically implant itself in the human heart; it must be learned. God has given humans the capacity to learn and know. He has also gifted the church with pastors, teachers, and evangelists who have been tasked with the great privilege and responsibility of teaching the truth of the Scriptures to the church.

It is good and wise for Christians to study and teach the Scriptures with certain principles as their guardrails. First, Scripture interprets Scripture. By studying the whole counsel of Scripture, particular passages are made plain. Second, context interprets Scripture. Knowing who wrote the particular passage in question and for what reason is key to right application. Thirdly, the author's original intent is what the passage means, not what those who came after him would like it to mean. Finally, clear passages help interpret the unclear passages.

1. Formed by God (Isa. 44:21)

The passage of Scripture found in Isaiah 44:21 was written by the prophet Isaiah to the people of Israel hundreds of years before Christ. Thus, we must begin studying this passage by recognizing that it was written to ancient Israel and that it was expressed in the context of the covenant of Law. As the New Testament church, we are now reading this passage under the covenant of grace.



In this verse, what was God's message for Israel through His prophet Isaiah?

The Book of Isaiah has been appropriately referred to as the Gospel of Isaiah. Isaiah's writings are replete with descriptions and promises of the grace and mercy of God. It also contains important references to the coming of the Messiah who would be our Mediator and Intercessor, Jesus Christ the righteous. When God spoke these words through His prophet Isaiah, Israel was falling woefully short of obeying the laws God had given them. God promised Israel that if they would obey His laws, revere His name, and worship Him with whole-heartedness, He would bless them. However, if they disobeyed, God would curse them and chastise them.

God would certainly discipline His people (through the exile at the hand of Babylon), but in this passage God spoke of redeeming His people. He promised them that He would not forget them because He formed them and they were His servants.



What do we learn about God in verse 21? What do these truths mean for those who trust in Christ today?

Several astounding truths become clear to us as we read this verse carefully and with humble, faith-filled hearts. First of all, Israel existed because God acted on their behalf. God formed Israel and called Israel to Himself. God formed Israel from the seed of Abraham, whom He plucked from the cesspool of idolatry and sin. Secondly, God has a special love for those whom He has called to Himself. The nation of Israel existed because of God's provision, protection, and guidance. They were His and He loved them with a special, enduring love. God gave Himself to Israel to be their God. Thirdly, it follows that if God was to be their God, Israel should be God's people. In other words, Israel should respond to God with devotion, reverence, fear, and love. He was their God and they were His people.

Christians do not live under the covenant of the law. Christians do not seek to keep the law in order to please God and gain His favor. Rather, Christians live under the covenant of grace, which says that God has made atonement for their sins (past, present, and future) through the Person and work of Jesus Christ; and all who look to Christ with faith and repentance are given the right to become children of God. (See John 1:12.) This is by grace through faith, not of works. (See Eph. 2:1-8.)

This means the promises we find here for Israel can be applied to those who are in Christ today. In fact, Christians can take hold of these truths with more clarity than those who heard Isaiah's words in ancient Israel. They were just as true then, but Christians today have the benefit of knowing the Redeemer. First, Christians know and rejoice in the fact that they are now the people of God, not because they made themselves that way, but because they have been called by God to become His own. Like Abraham was called out of the darkness, so Christians today were dead in their sins, and were made alive by God through Christ. (See Eph. 2:5.) Second, Christians today enjoy a God's special, fatherly love because they have been made children of God. Christians don't look to God as a distant tyrannical dictator but as a kind and gracious Father who never tires of His children's requests and always does what is best for them, even when they do not see it themselves. Finally, Christians belong to God. Those who have been called and loved by the Father will orient their hearts toward Him. The force of His grace and presence is too great to leave a person unchanged and unmoved.

? Application: What do you need to remember about how God has redeemed you? How does your life show evidence of being plucked from the pathway to eternal darkness and put on the Christ-won road to heaven?

2. Redeemed by God (Isa. 44:22)

Remember, Isaiah was prophesying to a people who were living under the covenant of law in which they were promised life and blessing if they would keep God's law, but curse and death if they refused. Israel had refused to obey God's law. From the

time He rescued them from slavery in Egypt until Isaiah's day, they continually turned away from their God and His law to follow their own hearts and their own idols.

This is why verse 22 is so important. It is true and good that God calls people out of darkness. It is right that He loves them with an enduring love. And it follows that they ought to return that love to Him, but what if they do not? What if they fail despite the grace and mercy of God?

 What was God's intention for His people in this verse?

Isaiah prophesied to a specific group of people in a certain time and place. The people of Israel were the people of God. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had done mighty wonders in their midst to form them and preserve them. He called them His very own people and He loved them with a special love. He gave them their own land and He revealed His will to them so that they might know how to live before Him. Yet, their stubborn hearts often went astray. They, like sheep, turned each one to their own way. (See Isa. 53:6.)

Each person who heard the God's words through the prophet Isaiah had sinned against God and fallen short of His glorious standard. Each one had failed to love God with all of their mind, heart, and soul. Whether they were willing to admit it or not, they had were guilty of violating the covenant. When they heard this promise from the lips of Isaiah, one of two things would happen in the hearts of each hearer. Either they would respond with repentance, faith and joy or they would respond with contempt, self-righteousness, and pride.

God promised that His redemption, which started at the Red Sea (so to speak), didn't stop there. He would continue to redeem them. His redemption wasn't limited to freeing them from the temporary tyranny of Egypt, but from the eternal tyranny of sin and the devil. Not everyone, however, were partakers of this promise. Only those whose hearts who had experienced the transformed mercy and kindness of God would have ears to hear this promise. Their receptiveness would be evidenced by humility, repentance, faith, and rejoicing.



How do the truths Isaiah spoke to Israel in the verse apply to Christians today?

Isaiah 44:22 is a gospel promise. Those who are in Christ that read this should think of their own sin and the precious blood of Christ spilled at Calvary on their behalf. Christians today read the words “your transgressions” and they know beyond any shadow of any doubt that if they were to pile up their transgressions to the sky, then they would easily reach the moon. Those who are in Christ who read the words, “your sins” are keenly aware that if the world could see all of the ways in which they have transgressed the law of God in thought, word, and deed, then they would be despised among men. Christians that read that their iniquities are swept away like a cloud and like a mist should become like the groom who fixes his eyes on his bride as she walks down the aisle to be wed to him. They are like the one who stumbles over a wooden box in the woods only to find that is filled with gold. They are like the mother who embraces her newborn child. In other words, every other thing of this world fades into the background. Singular focus is given to this one treasure. All else pales in comparison to this great, unspeakable joy. And then come the words, “Return to me, for I have redeemed you.” How could a person not run to their heavenly Father with hearts bursting with joy and thanksgiving in light of this promise?

But those who haven't been redeemed can't embrace this promise. If a person does not treasure this promise, they are not in Christ. How can a person rejoice that their sin has been forgiven if it hasn't? And how could they not rejoice if it has?




Application: How does Isaiah 44:22 cause you to cling to Christ more tightly rejoicing in His work on your behalf? If you've not trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, how is God speaking to you about that now?

3. For His Glory (Isa. 44:23-24)

Mankind is utterly incapable of saving itself. This is true now and it was true in ancient Israel. If God doesn't call lost sinners out of darkness to redeem them, then they will remain in the darkness of their sins. But God has revealed Himself to humanity (through both general and special revelation) and has made a way for people to be saved from their sins. He does this by crediting Christ's active obedience to the whole law and passive obedience in His death as their righteousness.


Christians are saved because God looks upon them as though they had never sinned, and as though they were as righteous as Christ.

 What does verse 23 tell us about God's purpose in redemption, both in the past and today?

Verse 23 makes it clear that the ultimate purpose of God's work to redeem His own is for His own glory, "For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorifies himself through Israel." This truth is confirmed in the previous chapter when God said, "everyone who bears my name and is created for my glory. I have formed them; indeed, I have made them" (Isa. 43:7).

God is the chief and best of all beings. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and truth. God is worthy of worship and honor. There is nothing more good and right than for those He has redeemed to glorify His name among the earth. When the Israelites glorified God, they fulfilled their ultimate purpose and their joy was complete.


All of that is still true today. People are still created for the glory of God and God is still glorious. Paul told the Corinthian church, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). And in 1 Timothy 1:17 Paul proclaimed: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

 Application: How does your life give glory to God? What changes might need to take place that your life would bring further glory to Him?

Conclusion

The gospel promises found in Isaiah 44 are like balm to the souls of those who love and treasure Christ. Christians know the depth of their depravity and the breadth of God's mercy and grace. They live lives of rejoicing because they are now children of the one true and living God. They have a seat at His table and a home for eternity.

 How does God's redemption in our lives bring Him glory?

 How should the reality of redemption change the way we live and interact with others in the church?

 How does the truth of redemption give you motivation to share the gospel with others?

CHRIST CONNECTION: This rebellion, however, is an occasion for the glory of God to be displayed across the earth. All who look to Christ for salvation are restored to right relationship with God and glorify God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: God uses His people to draw more souls to Himself that He might lavish His amazing grace and rich mercy upon them. The end result is that God gets more glory and people get more joy.



FOR NEXT WEEK

God is Self-Sacrificing

Main Passages

- Philippians 2:6-11

Session Outline

1. He Took on Flesh (Phil. 2:6-7)
2. He Underwent Trials (Phil. 2:8a)
3. He Submitted to the Cross (Phil. 2:8b-11)

Memorize

*Rejoice, heavens, for the Lord has acted;
shout, depths of the earth.*

*Break out into singing, mountains,
forest, and every tree in it.*

*For the Lord has redeemed Jacob,
and glorifies himself through Israel.*

- Isaiah 44:23, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - Isaiah 44:21-24
- Tuesday - 1 John 1:9
- Wednesday - 1 Peter 1:18-19
- Thursday - Colossians 1:22
- Friday - Job 19:25-26
- Saturday - Acts 4:12