

- *Isaiah asks Israel to notice what God is saying*

- *He rebukes the nation for its sin*

Isaiah 48 is the last of the 'Cyrus chapters'. Isaiah asks Israel to take special note of what God is saying. He rebukes the nation for its sin despite its many great privileges.

¹*'Listen to this, O house of Jacob,
you who are called by the name of Israel
and come from the line of Judah,
you who take oaths of loyalty in the name of Yahweh
and call to mind the God of Israel –
but not in truth or righteousness –
²you who call yourselves citizens of the holy city
and rely on the God of Israel –
Yahweh Almighty is his name.'*

1. Their rescue by Cyrus will be entirely undeserved

1. Their rescue by Cyrus will be entirely undeserved. They are God's people, and they like the idea of having Yahweh as their national God. Yet their oaths of loyalty and their delight in having a national God have no righteousness or sincerity in them. It is this that will lead to the nation's being exiled to Babylon. They will be rescued but their rescue will not be because of how good they are!

2. Their rescue by Cyrus is certain

2. Their rescue by Cyrus is certain. As the events Isaiah has predicted come to pass, they should learn something of the ways of God. If God has predicted the things that have already happened and his word proved true, then they should learn that the things that are yet to happen will equally prove true.

- *They should learn that what God promises will come true*

³*'I declared the former things long ago,
and from my mouth they went forth and I made them known;
then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.
⁴For I knew how argumentative you were;
the sinews of your neck were iron,
your forehead was bronze.'*

- *More predictions reaching further into the future – only God can get credit for them*

The former things are the things that God said about Assyria and then the predictions that were given about Cyrus. Yet there are more predictions to come that will reach even further into the future. It happens in a way that no one can get any credit for the prediction except God.

⁵*'Therefore I told you these things long ago;
before they happened I announced them to you
so that you could not say,
"My idol did those things;
my wooden image and metal god ordained them."
⁶You have heard these things; look at them all.
Will you not declare them?
From now on I will tell you of new things,
of hidden things unknown to you.
⁷They are created now, and not long ago;
you have not heard of them before today.
So you cannot say,
"Look, I knew of them."*

3. So what is God's reason for rescuing his people?

3. So what is God's reason for rescuing his people? They deserve nothing!

⁸*'Ah but you have neither heard nor known,
from of old your ear did not open.'*

*Well do I know how treacherous you are;
you were called a rebel from birth.'*

• *God has His own reasons for rescuing His people – honouring His promise glorifies Him*

So if Israel are so rebellious, what is the reason for his rescuing them from Babylon? God says it is 'for his own name's sake'. He has his own reasons. He will get himself glory by being true to his promise.

⁹*'For my own name's sake I keep back my wrath;
for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you,
so as not to cut you off.*

¹⁰*See, I have refined you, though not as one would silver;
I have renewed my choice of you in the furnace of affliction.*

¹¹*For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this.
For how can I let myself be defamed?
I will not yield my glory to another.'*

God has his own reasons within himself for his choice of Israel. He has refined them in Babylon. He is determined not to ever leave them, but the reasons for this are not in Israel. They are in God. He saves the nation (as he saves anyone) 'according to his own purpose and grace'.

4. He will act as the all-powerful Creator

4. He will act as the all-powerful Creator.

¹²*'Listen to me, O Jacob,
Israel, whom I have called:
I am he;*

I am the first and I am the last.

¹³*My own hand laid the foundations of the earth,
and my right hand spread out the heavens;
when I but call them,
they all stand up together.'*

• *He uses the same Creator-power when He calls Cyrus to rescue Israel*

He is using the same Creator-power when he calls Cyrus to rescue Israel.

¹⁴*'Come together, all of you, and listen:
Who among them declared these things?
Yahweh has loved him [Cyrus!];
he will do his pleasure,
and his arm is against the Chaldeans.*

¹⁵*I, even I, have spoken;
yes, I have called him.*

*I will bring him,
and he will succeed in his mission.'*

• *And again when He calls the Servant to do yet greater work*

And he is using the same Creator-power when he calls the Servant to do a yet greater work.

¹⁶*'Come near me and listen to this:
From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret;
at the time it happens, I am there.'
And now the Sovereign Yahweh has sent me,
with his Spirit.*

• *The Servant of God announces His coming and intends to see the promise fulfilled*

In verse 16 it is the Servant of Yahweh who is speaking. He has announced his coming and he intends to see the promise fulfilled. The Babylonian exile was caused by their own sin. God offered them instruction and guidance.

¹⁷*This is what Yahweh says,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
'I am Yahweh your God,
who teaches you what profits you the most,
who directs you in the way you should go.'*

5. Political restoration will not give them back their lost peace

• *Something greater is needed*

• *God is ending the chastening*

• *When He saves them from Babylon it will be like their exodus from Egypt – abundant provision*

• *Political salvation still leaves them in spiritual need*

• *The 'Prince of Peace' will be the Servant*

5. But political restoration will not give them back their lost peace. Something greater is needed. God offered them great peace and an influence among the nations as a result of their righteousness. The promise of great numbers would have been fulfilled.

¹⁸ 'If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

¹⁹ Your seed would have been like the sand, your children like its numberless grains; their name would never be cut off nor destroyed from before me.'

Now God is intervening and bringing the chastening to an end. They must be ready to go to Babylon, but the day will come when they must be ready to leave it.

²⁰ Leave Babylon, get away quickly from the Chaldeans! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, 'Yahweh has redeemed his servant Jacob.'

²¹ They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock; he split the rock and water gushed out.

When he saves them from Babylon it will be like a repetition of the exodus earlier in their history. Again there will be abundant provision for them. But political salvation still leaves them in spiritual need. Verse 22 comes in as a surprise and yet it makes perfect sense. When Cyrus has rescued Israel they will still need something more.

²² 'There is no peace,' says Yahweh, 'for the wicked.'

The possibility of returning to Jerusalem would come to Israel. Yet still this would not solve the spiritual problem of the guilt and power of sin. Even though God would rescue them politically (by sending Cyrus), yet still something greater would be needed. For there would still be no peace for the wicked. Their wickedness brought an end to their peace. One day they would return to Israel – many of them. Yet Cyrus could not solve the problem of the lost peace. The 'Prince of Peace' will be the Servant – not Cyrus. 'Proclaiming peace' will indeed become a possibility, but only because 'the punishment that brought us peace' will come upon the Servant of the Lord.



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