



Preaching Through The Bible, Michael Eaton

Isaiah

Part 72

Spiritual Awakening (51:17-52:2)

• Salvation is coming - Isaiah calls upon Jerusalem to wake up

Throughout 51:1 to 52:12 Isaiah is describing the great salvation that is coming. It is powerful and achieves mighty things from small beginnings. It will touch the entire world. God's people need have no fears.

Isaiah has called upon God to wake up. But now he calls upon Jerusalem to wake up also.

1. First they must wake up to what has happened to them

1. First they must wake up to what has happened to them.

*¹⁷Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!
Rise up, O Jerusalem,
you who have drunk from the hand of Yahweh
the cup of his wrath,
you who have drained to its dregs
the goblet of the cup of trembling.*

• Babylonian exile – removal of all blessings and banishment

Isaiah is referring to the Babylonian exile. It was a time God removed all of the blessings of the land of Israel and banished them altogether.

*¹⁸Of all the sons she bore
there was none to guide her;
of all the sons she reared
there was none to take her by the hand.*

• Israel must see what it has been rescued from

At such a time the nation was wandering in total confusion, without any kind of guide. Israel has been rescued by God but the nation must see what it has been rescued from.

• Isaiah recalls the suffering of the Babylonian invasion

Isaiah recalls the terrible disasters of Babylonian invasion. Jerusalem was ruined. The people suffered terribly.

*¹⁹These double calamities have come upon you –
how can I comfort you? –
ruin and destruction, famine and sword –
how can I comfort you?*

• God's people had no strength to resist – God's anger was severe

They were without strength to resist. God's anger fell upon them with great severity.

*²⁰Your sons have fainted;
they lie at the head of every street,
like antelope caught in a net.
They are filled with the wrath of Yahweh
and the rebuke of your God.*

• Isaiah asks them to face all of this

Isaiah asks them to face all of this. Sin brings disaster. God will rescue them but let them see how severe was their plight and what caused it.

2. Now the time of disaster is complete

2. Now the time of disaster is complete. Isaiah has good news for them.

*²¹Therefore hear this, you downtrodden one,
made drunk, but not with wine.
²²This is what your Sovereign Yahweh says,
your God, who pleads the cause of his people:
'See, I have taken out of your hand
the cup of trembling,
the goblet of my wrath;
you will never drink it ever again.
²³I will put it into the hands of your tormentors*

*who said to you,
"Fall prostrate that we may walk over you."
And you made your back like the ground,
like a street to be walked over.'*

• Israel will be rescued from God's anger

They have been drinking a cup of divine anger. But now that time has finished. Israel will be rescued from God's anger. They have been like a drunk staggering under the influence of his drink. But now the cup of wrath which caused the drunkenness is to be removed. The people of God will no longer be victims for agents of wickedness to oppress.

3. They must wake up to what is God's intention for them

3. They must wake up to what is God's intention for them. The theme of 'waking up' is dominant in this part of Isaiah. God is 'waking up' after a period of seeming inactivity. Let them wake up also. They must wake up to their plight. Now – says Isaiah – they must wake up to the need of godly living.

What is this 'awakening' to holiness? (i) It involves the determination to be strong.

• They must wake up to the need for godly living

*¹Zion, wake up, wake up,
clothe yourself with strength.*

(i) Determination to be strong

Of course we are all very weak, yet we are commanded to be 'strong in the Lord'. Strength is there for us. For us to experience it, faith is needed. We must believe God can give us strength beyond our own ability. Isaiah demands it!

(ii) Becoming priests to the world

(ii) It involves becoming priests to the world. God had long ago promised that his entire people (not merely the tribe of Levi) would be 'priests' to the world. It means we pray for the world and God hears our prayers. It means too that we bring God's instruction to the world. Priests are to be people of knowledge. So the entire people of God are to put on the garments that speak of priesthood (the background is Exodus 28:2).

• Every kind of polluting sin will be kept out of the new Jerusalem

*Clothe yourselves with your garments of beauty,
O Jerusalem, the holy city.
The uncircumcised and defiled
will not enter you again*

Every kind of polluting sin will be kept out of the new Jerusalem that God is bringing into being. The people must see that it happens.

• God's people must 'shake off the dust' of the sinful way of living

*²Shake off your dust;
rise up, sit enthroned, O Jerusalem.
Free yourself from the chains on your
neck, O captive Daughter of Zion.*

• We reign with God

When you leave a city you symbolically shake the dust off your sandals. It is a sign of wanting nothing more to do with that piece of ground! God's people must 'shake off the dust' of the sinful way of living. They must act like kings, not like slaves. God reigns over us and we reign with him. He is the great King; we are little kings sharing his rule. He has dominion over the universe. We have dominion too. We are conquerors and the first thing we conquer is our own sinfulness! This is what is involved in the coming salvation. Israel had been for years in Babylon. God had powerfully banished crude idolatry from his people. They were still not a deserving people. The end of the chastening anger of God was a matter of mercy and (as Isaiah 53 will let us know) a matter of atonement. Their hope of recovery was in the mercy of God, not in their 'paying a price' for revival (as it is sometimes put — but quite wrongly!). Their time of discipline is finished. God is about to have mercy upon them. But let them wake up! Let them take seriously the anger of God against the way they have been living. And let them wake up to God's restoring mercy as well.

• God's people need to wake up to God's anger against the way they have been living and to God's restoring mercy

Dr Michael Eaton (1942-2017) was highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. Born in the UK, he lived for many years in Kenya where he became a citizen. He was one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship in Nairobi. His Preaching through the Bible books are highly popular worldwide, written in a clear and down-to-earth style but underpinned by rigorous scholarship. Some of these books have been reformatted as individual sheets for personal and group study and preaching. The New Testament volumes have been re-edited and combined in the Branch Commentary. The Old Testament, including previously unpublished material will follow. More details: www.slices.org.uk.