

“Paying Attention” Isaiah 48:1-22

Context: Isaiah is a book of prophecies about salvation, cryptically indicated by the Hebrew meaning of his name. At first glance, the book tells of the salvation of the Jewish people from oppression by the Syrians, Babylonians, and Persians. A deeper look reveals salvation from worship of illusionary gods made by human imagination. God’s plan uses distress, such as warring nations, famine, and slavery, as discipline to turn people back to Him for help. These prophecies demonstrate God’s omniscience to foresee the future and His omnipotence to bring that future about. God’s salvific plan is not often well received, mind you, but those who heed it and become part of it are promised ultimate liberation of their souls from the consequences of the Fall. Today’s text considers Isaiah’s prediction of the coming of Israel’s liberator, Cyrus the Persian, 150 years before it happened. The vision assures Israel that God is in control of the outcome of history and He controls that outcome for His glory and good pleasure. **Life Principle:** Pay attention to His precepts; then peace and good will be found in your journey. Ignore them and disaster will be the price paid on the path of destruction (cp. Isaiah 48:18).

1. Paying attention to His glory – Isaiah 48:1-11

God indicts Israel as having a profession of faith without truth and righteousness. Their cynical, self-serving attitudes necessitated that God deliver them in ways they could not attribute to the false gods of the people about them (i.e., the destruction of Babylon).

2. Paying attention to His prophecies – Isaiah 48:12-16

God, speaking out of His self-existence and omnipotence over history, sends His Messenger as His Word. He also sends His Spirit along with His Messenger so that His Word might be understood.

3. Paying attention to His teaching – Isaiah 48:17-22

The Remnant’s part is to pay attention to God’s teaching. An inner sense of fulfillment and an outer life of integrity are promised to follow, along with the ever-refreshing presence of His Spirit.

Study questions:

- Some commentators are mystified by the identity of the “me” described in Isaiah 48:16. Some think it is Isaiah, others Cyrus, others say it is an erroneous textual addition, and yet others say it is the Messiah. Who is speaking in this context? Some translations capitalize the pronoun; others do not. Why? What is the difficulty with interpreting “me” as Jesus Christ? Is the difficulty the same when interpreting the Holy Spirit, who is sent, as God? Could the reference to “the rock” in verses 21-22 have a bearing on your interpretation (cf. Exodus 17:6; 1 Corinthians 10:4; John 7:38-39)?

- In Isaiah 48:16, the Lord sends the Holy Spirit along with His messenger of redemption. What is the work of the Holy Spirit as professed by GracePoint (see footnotes 7-14 ‘**On the Holy Spirit**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org)? What appears to be the work of the Holy Spirit in this passage? How do you seek to have the Holy Spirit cooperate in this work in your life (John 7:38-39)?

- Isaiah 48:18 calls for “paying attention” to God’s commandments. The verbal form, a *hiphil*, reveals a causative nature associated with the verb. As a **Bible study method**, look up “paid attention” in TWOT (#2084c). How do you cause yourself to obey God’s commands responsibly and conscientiously? Where does the study of Scripture fit into your busy schedule? What is your method of studying Scripture? Do you make time to hear Him in prayer? What does that sound like?

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Isaiah 48:17. Read the chapter of Proverbs which corresponds to the date of the month. Does anything jump out at you? Study the word or phrase that struck you. Ask the Spirit to direct your thoughts that the Proverb might be lived out throughout each day. At the end of the week, reflect on whether you found peace like a river, as the Scripture promised.