

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part LV: God's Use Of Prophecy To Glorify Himself In Grace (Isaiah 48:1-11)

I. Introduction

- A. God places a high priority on His unmerited favor, upon His grace as opposed to human meritorious works. This emphasis shows up not only in regards to our salvation, but to all of life and service. (Lewis Sperry Chafer, Grace: An Exposition of God's Marvelous Gifts, 1995, p. 11-12, "Preface to the Second Edition")
- B. God's grace is seen in His use of prophecy according to Isaiah 48:1-11, and we view this passage for insight:

II. God's Use Of Prophecy To Glorify Himself In Grace, Isaiah 48:1-11.

- A. Ministering to Judah's people in their future Babylonian Captivity, Isaiah addressed them as unrighteous, undeserving people even in captivity when one would think they would have a repentant attitude, Isa. 48:1-2:
 - 1. In captivity, (a) Israel would bear the name "Israel," what God graciously named their forefather Jacob in Genesis 32:24-28 when he stopped relying on his own power to protect himself from his brother Esau and relied instead on the Lord; (b) the people of Israel would see themselves to being from Judah, (c) they would take oaths in the name of their Almighty God, (d) but they would do so falsely in sin, Isaiah 48:1.
 - 2. They would thus sin by calling themselves citizens of the holy city of Jerusalem and presumably relying on the Almighty God of Israel, but as hypocrites, many of them would be content to stay in Babylon when allowed to return to Israel by Cyrus versus such claims, Isaiah 48:2; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1102.
- B. God announced to this stubbornly wayward people that He had predicted their Babylonian Captivity long before and then He had suddenly fulfilled such prophecies, for He knew they were stubborn, and would thus have credited their false idols who could not prophecy for the arrival of their captivity, Isaiah 48:3-5, 6a; *Ibid.*
- C. However, after Israel's Babylonian Captivity, God would again predict new things, hidden things not before known to Israel, things newly created and not heard by Israel in her past (Isaiah 48:6b-8a), things having to do with the details of Israel's return to the land under Cyrus, for Israel was spiritually treacherous, a rebel against the Lord from birth in always being open to credit false gods with events that she faced, Isaiah 48:8b; *Ibid.*
- D. Accordingly, not for Israel's sake, but for God's own reputation would He delay His wrath against Israel, and for the sake of His praise would He hold it back so as not to cut off Israel from existing so that He might keep His prophetic Word to return her to the land and to bless her, Isaiah 48:9; *Ibid.*
- E. God would have used the trial of the Babylonian Captivity to refine Israel, not as one refines silver, but refining her character to a degree in the furnace of affliction, Isaiah 48:10 *ESV, NIV.*
- F. This was all for the sake of the Lord's reputation, for His own sake would He be doing this, for He could not let Himself be defamed by totally annihilating Israel for her sin, and He would not give His glory to another false deity or to any other entity by not fulfilling His prophecies to restore her to the land, Isaiah 48:11; *Ibid.*

Lesson: Every move by God regarding Judah's Babylonian Captivity and her restoration to the land after that captivity was made in grace in light of Israel's stubborn wickedness: (1) the fact that God long before had predicted her captivity without fulfilling it for a while only quickly to fulfill it when He began to act to keep Israel from thinking her false gods had fulfilled it, (2) the fact that God would be sharing new information about the details of her return to the land and (3) the fact that He would restore her even though she was still stubbornly wicked though partly refined to preserve His reputation all demonstrated His great grace toward Israel.

Application: (1) May we believers recall that God's dealings with us are never based upon anything God owes us, for we are at best unprofitable servants due to the enormous unmerited favor God has bestowed upon us not only to save us, but to make us even functionally effective for His glory in life and service, cf. Luke 17:7-10. (2) Yet, may we always recall that we can count on God's goodness to be administered to us due to His desire to honor His own Word regarding His blessings for us: for example, our salvation is unconditionally eternally secure (John 5:24) not because we live perfectly righteous lives after salvation, but because of God's unmerited favor to us in Christ regardless if every believer sins after salvation, 1 John 1:10. (3) The TIMING of God's application of His Word to our lives (cf. Isaiah 48:3-5, 6a) is itself designed to glorify God's unmerited favor unto us and not to glorify human merit, so may we revere God in the way He TIMES events to occur in line with His Word. (4) If we face refining trials allowed by the Lord, He wants us to learn to heed His will not to rely on our own powers or on our own alleged goodness, but to trust in Him and His provisions for us, Isaiah 48:1 with Genesis 32:24-28.