

1.9.17 evening

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Preacher: Craig Dyer

[0 : 00] Thank you so much, David. Good evening, everyone. It's a real privilege and joy to be with you this weekend. Thank you so much for the invitation. And I'm looking forward to fellowship, to getting to know you a little bit better.

And most of all, to us being together in the presence of the Lord and by his grace, hearing his work and remembering the Lord Jesus and proclaiming our confidence, not in ourselves, but in him. And I want us to be thinking about that in each of the meetings that we have over this coming weekend. I'd really appreciate it if you'd open your Bibles to Isaiah's prophecy.

We're going to look at four sections of Isaiah. Now, I know that I come to this beautiful part of the world and I know that this is a place where the word of God is held in honour.

But I want to be so bold as to say to you as we begin tonight, although you know this is the word of God, although you love the word of God, you might find in the back of your head just that little voice that says, Oh, this is really hard to understand. I'm not going to like this. I'm not going to get anything from this. It's too difficult to get my head in.

[1 : 14] I just find Isaiah so complicated. And it is complicated. But I'm going to work hard and lean even harder on the Lord to try and make his word as plain as I possibly can.

And I'm aiming this weekend to do what the Lord Jesus did, to be plain and clear. So I'm not trying to sound more than I am. I just want it to be clear and plain.

So team up with me as we read the word and as the word is preached. What do I mean by that?

Team up in the sense you say, now this guy, I'm going to give him a square goal.

I'm not going to doze off in the first hour and a half. I'm kidding. I'm not going to doze off. I'm going to concentrate. I'm going to see if I can grasp because this is the word of God.

You team up with me and I'll team up with you and together we'll expect God to speak from his amazing truth. So let's read it together. Isaiah 30 from verse 1.

[2 : 23] And the first line is from Almighty God himself. Ah, stubborn children, declares the Lord, who carry out a plan, but not mine, who make an alliance, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.

Who set out to go down to Egypt without asking for my direction, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt. Therefore, shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation.

For though his officials are at Zohan and his envoys reach Hanis, everyone comes to shame through a people that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.

An oracle of the beasts of the Negev. Through a land of trouble and anguish, from where come the lioness and the lion, the adder and the fiery, the flying fiery serpent.

They carry their riches on the backs of the sea of the sea of the sea, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them. Egypt's help is worthless and empty.

[3 : 44] Therefore I have called her, Rahab, who sits still. And now go, write it before them on a tablet, and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come, as a witness forever.

For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord, who say to the seers, do not see.

To the prophets, do not prophesy to us what is right. Speak to us smooth things. Prophecy illusions. Leave the way.

Turn aside from the path. Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel. Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, Because you despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness, and rely on them, Therefore this iniquity shall be to you, like a breach in a high wall bulging out and

about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly and in an instant.

And its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel, that is smashed so ruthlessly, that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth, or to dip up water out of the system.

[5 : 04] For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning, or in repentance and rest, you shall be saved. In quietness and in trust shall be your strength.

But you were unwilling. And you said, No, we will flee upon horses. Therefore, you shall flee away. And we will ride upon swift speeds.

Therefore, your pursuers shall be swift. A thousand shall flee in the threat of one, and at the threat of five you shall flee till you are left, like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal on a hill.

Therefore, the Lord waits to be gracious to you. And therefore, he exalts himself to show mercy to you, for the Lord is a God of justice.

Blessed are those who wait for him. For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem. You shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry.

[6 : 07] As soon as he hears it, he answers you. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teacher will not hide himself anymore. But your eyes shall see your teacher, and your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way.

Walk in it. When you turn to the right and when you turn to the left, then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and gold, plated metal images.

You will scatter them as unclean things. You'll say to them, Be gone! And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground and bread, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous.

In that day your livestock will graze in large pastures. The oxen and the donkeys that work the ground will eat seasoned fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. And on every lofty mountain, and every high hill, will be brooks running with water in the day of great slaughter when the towers fall.

Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold as the light of seven days in the day when the Lord binds up the brokenness of his people and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

[7 : 23] Behold, the name of the Lord comes from afar, burning with his anger and in thick, rising smoke. His lips are full of fury. His tongue is like a devouring fire.

His breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray.

You shall have a song as in the night when a holy feast is kept. And gladness of heart as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the Lord, to the rock of Israel, and the Lord will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen in furious anger and in flame of devouring fire with a cloudburst and storm and hailstones.

The Assyrians will be terror-stricken at the voice of the Lord when he strikes with his rod. And every stroke of the appointed staff that the Lord lays on them will be to the sound of tambourines and lyres.

Battling with brandished arm, he will fight with them. For a burning place has long been prepared. Indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide with fire and wood in abundance.

[8 : 39] The breath of the Lord like a stream of sulphur kindled it. Amen. This is the word of God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We pray for a moment before the pain comes up.

Amen. Our Heavenly Father, once more we thank you for your word to us and your presence with us.

And we thank you for your servant over us and for the word that you have laid upon his heart as he prepared to come here. We pray that as he opens the sacred book that he would know the help of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, come Holy Ghost to our hearts inspire. That's our song and that's our prayer. God through himself we then shall know if thou within us shine and shine with all I sense below the depths of love divine.

We pray, Lord God, that we would come to know you or come to know you better through your word as it is preached this evening. and we pray for your help for Craig in the preaching and for each one of us in listening that you would open our hearts and inspire us and we pray this in Jesus' name.

[10:03] Amen. Well, let's turn back in our Bibles to that passage that we read together please.

That would be a great help if I know that you've got the text in front of you there. We're living in days of political decisions that seem to be taking the world by surprise.

Wherever I travel around the world Christianity Explored is in over 100 countries now people are saying to me is it true that you've voted to leave the European Union?

So there's mystery around the world about decisions made by the British political electorate and there's mystery around the world about decisions made by the American electorate.

Is it true that you've appointed Donald Trump to be your president? I'm not making any comment on either of these decisions. I have my views but it's not for tonight. Who cares? It's of no relevance.

[11:09] But I'm just acknowledging that we live in days when the pundits and the people are shaking their heads in a moment and things are happening that they never experienced. And that's what you would have done if you'd lived in one of the states in the eastern Mediterranean region in Isaiah's time especially in the time of Isaiah chapter 30.

When you heard news that in order to get free from the brutal control of Assyria Israel was planning on going to Egypt for help you would have been like the people today shaking your head in stunned disbelief.

When this plan first became known there must have been folks who said no you've got that wrong. There's no way Israel would go back to Egypt for help. Of course they want to be free from Assyrian control.

Of course they do. But surely they would never go back to Egypt. The Egyptians neither had the heart to love Israel nor the power to save Israel.

God had a nickname for Egypt. We find it in verse 7. Verse 7 says Egypt's help is worthless and empty. Therefore I have called her Rahab who sits still.

[12:24] Now you'll not laugh at that because it means nothing to us. Rahab who sits still. But there was a mythical sea monster at that time called Rahab. A bit like our Loch Ness equivalent.

Of course the closer you get to Inverness the more people fervently believe in the Loch Ness monster because of the thousands of people who come up every year to see it or to try to see it. There was this kind of Loch Ness equivalent called Rahab and whenever the waters were stirred some people who were a bit weak in the head in the time said oh that's Rahab the monster. But the monster never came because the monster was never there. And God calls Egypt Rahab who sits still a do-nothing a non-existent hell.

And above all for generations since the Exodus Israel had worshipped the one who was known as the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt.

[13:28] That was the thing that they said every time they gathered. He is the Lord your God who brought us out of Egypt. Egypt represented as miserable a time in the past for Israel as Assyria represented in the present at the period of Isaiah 30.

And if you like being Brexiteers from Egypt was a core part of their national identity. They were those who had been miraculously delivered by their God from Egypt.

and in the past Egypt had spelled death for Israel. What a place to look for life. Above all this was spiritually catastrophic.

God had brought them out of Egypt to go back there was to commit apostasy. Now how does this affect us in Tarbrook tonight? How does this have any relevance to us?

I guarantee none of us is seriously tempted to go to Egypt for help. I bet that's not a prevailing temptation in your life. No I'm sure it's not but there are people and there are places and there are pastimes and there are plans that you have in your life to which you retreat from the Lord for promised peace and power and pleasure.

[14:51] But like Egypt these things do not deliver. They are the opposite of what the Lord has for his people but still we go to them. We know they don't do us any good but still magnetically we feel their pull.

And the issue before us today is the same as it was in Isaiah 30. God tells us this in verse 8. He says to Isaiah now go write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book that it may be for time to come as a witness forever.

So Isaiah has written as a witness to people's determination to rebel against God and his determination to rescue. And that's essentially the two things I want us to look at tonight.

Israel's determination to rebel and God's determination to rescue his people. He wrote it for his day.

He wrote it for our day. He wrote it as we'll see for days to come. So let's look at the first of these. Number one what we might call our determination to rebel.

[16:03] There's no logical or historical reason for Israel to walk out on God and go back to the very place from which he had delivered them.

To do that is spiritual treason. It was deliberate wickedness. Look at verse 1. Ah, stubborn children declares the Lord.

Who carry out a plan but not mine. Who make an alliance but not of my spirit that they may add sin to sin. The first sin was acting without the Lord's direction.

The second sin was seeking protection somewhere other than the Lord and his covering spirit. That was the sin that they were adding to sin. Verse 31 calls it iniquity.

It's the deep down perverse delight in doing the opposite of what God says. To do what is known to be wrong irrespective of motive is to deliberately rebel against the Lord.

[17:09] And we know that millions of people across the world do that without even knowing the God against whom they're rebelling. them. But the people of Israel should have known better.

They had to go to considerable trouble and take risks in their plan to liaise with Egypt and get some help. Have a glance at verse 6 in their Bibles and see the dangers of the route that their envoys had to take.

See the treasure that their donkeys had to carry in order to buy favour in Egypt and see how pointless it all was. And amazingly they take the indirect route, they take the same route that God brought them out of Egypt on, only they take it in the reverse order.

The very same route. Exodus 13, 17 says when Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was mere.

For God said, less do people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt. Way back then, God had done that. And if we could see the Hebrew of verse 1 and verse 5, what would jump out to us would be four negatives standing out as the Lord summed up Israel's attempted alliance with Assyria.

[18:36] Not my plan, not my spirit, not for help, not for profit. Ah, stubborn children, verse 1, to praise the Lord, who carry out a plan, but not mine.

The Lord has his plan, which he is carrying out and has been since before time began. The Lord has his plan. It is unaffected by any rebellion in this world, but the people he has created and loved, to whom he's made himself known, are determined to rebel against him.

And Isaiah shows us this rebellion in three ways. Number one, they were determined not to go his way. Look how the Lord characterizes his people's determination, to do the opposite of what he says.

In verse 11, the people plead with their leaders, verse 11, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel. They knew full well the way of the Lord.

it's in verse 15, for thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning or in repentance and rest you shall be saved. In quietness and in trust shall be your strength, but you were unwilling and you said no.

[19:58] I wonder as you look at this tonight, are you beginning to see it like a mirror? As I do. It's just such a critique of the frail inner workings of my heart.

What we read in verse 15 is timeless. It was true of God's plan for Israel in the Old Testament, true for his church in the New Testament. We're saved exactly as verse 15 describes.

We're saved by returning, by repenting and by turning around 180 degrees and moving towards God and resting in him and what he's done for us.

Resting in what his son has accomplished for us. That's why when we come to the Lord's table, we're not demonstrating our confidence in ourselves. We're not parading our sense of adequacy.

We're not announcing to the community that we consider ourselves worthy. What we're saying is, I come here to take bread and wine and rest in what was accomplished for me at the cross.

[21:08] And all my trust and all my hope is in what happened to me then. I'm turning back to the Lord with all my heart. But millions like Israel here are unwilling and say no.

And this applies to the religious people as well who want to wrestle rather than rest. Who want to try rather than trust. And back in the context for Israel this meant, verse 2, those who set out to go down to Egypt without asking for my direction.

So number one, they were determined not to go his way. Number two, they were determined not to trust his power. You see, verse 15 shows us that there is strength for God's people to enjoy and to be secure in.

In quietness and in trust shall be your strength. This is literally warrior strength. The Lord is giving Isaiah here to speak about the strength we need for the battles of life.

I'm only here for a couple of days but I guarantee in any group this size there are people who are going through major battles in life of all different types of description.

[22 : 27] and this is telling us that there is warrior strength for the battles of life and it comes in quietness and in trust when we've turned back to the Lord, when we're trusting in him, when we're relying on him entirely, when we're going his way.

But they were determined not to trust his power. it seems a weak, hopeless thing to quietly, patiently trust in the Lord and so verse 2, here are those who set out to go down to Egypt without asking for my direction, says the Lord, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh, to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt.

Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation. They were determined not to trust his power but to find something more reliable than the Lord their God in Egypt.

Can you imagine such a... Yeah, you can. And I can too. Verse 16, you said, no, no, we're not going to rely on the Lord, we're not going to trust in him, no, we will flee upon horses.

Therefore you shall flee away. And we will ride upon swift steeds. Therefore your pursuers shall be swift. Instead of quite trusting the Lord, Israel was banking on fast horses from Egypt.

[23 : 57] And this is deliberate, willful rebellion. They were determined not to go his way.

They were determined not to trust his power. Thirdly, they were determined not to hear his word.

And we've got to be asking ourselves as we listen to this critique from the passage, we've got to be asking ourselves, is this true to me?

Determine not to go his way. Determine not to trust his power. Determine not to hear his word. It really is an astonishing thing when we think about it, that the God who has made the universe, the God who made this magnificent part of the world, David's right, my mind was blown as we drove down today from storming me.

The one who holds everything in the palm of his hand, has made himself known to us, he has spoken to us, he has given us his word. And it's complicated.

You read Isaiah 30 and your head's spinning. At least my head is spinning when I come to study it. Because he's an infinite God and I'm not an infinite man.

[25 : 08] But it's an astounding thing that he's given us his word. It's an astonishing thing that he speaks to us, that we can hear the voice of the God who holds all things in the palm of his hand.

But perhaps more astonishing still is that the normal human reaction to the God who speaks, who saves, who solves, is that we block our ears and scream so that we do not hear him.

verse 9, they're a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord.

Do you see how determined they were not to hear God speak to them? It was an act of the will.

They were unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord.

Verse 10, they say to the seers, do not see. To the prophets, do not prophesy to us what is right. Speak to us smooth things.

[26 : 21] Prophecy illusions. Now you know, don't you, that the seers were those gifted by God so called to see the truth and to proclaim his truth.

prophets. The prophets were the proclaimers of God's word. But rather than God's people gathering to hear what God is saying, they begged the preachers of the day not to look at his word, not to see anything of eternal value, not to look at what God says and not to tell them what God said.

They begged with them, begged and pled with them not to do that. And instead they asked the preachers to proclaim something that went down much easier than God's truth.

Speak to us smooth things. Prophecy illusions. I mean, could there be anything more contemporary in the western world today than that?

that even among those who gather and would claim to be the church of the Lord Jesus Christ on the Lord's day, what they really want is something smooth and easy.

[27 : 43] It doesn't even have to be true as long as it is sweet and smooth and pleasant and palatable. Remember that song from years ago, Let Me Entertain You?

It's as though they take these words and reverse them and they say to the preacher, Let You Entertain Me. Or as another song says, Tell Me Lies.

Tell Me Sweet Little Lies. Now, of course, people don't realise that this is what they're feeling. People don't realise this is what they're wanting.

They don't actually use these words. Isaiah is not quoting them, but he's putting into their mouths the effect of their actions as God sees them. As God sees them coming away from Him and from His Word.

As God sees how they relate to those whose responsibility is, it is to proclaim the Word of God. And He's putting this into their mouths.

[28 : 44] This is their way. They don't want to hear from God. Do not prophesy to us what is right. Speak to us smooth things. Prophecy illusion.

Verse 11, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel. Interestingly, they didn't ask for preaching to be completely abolished.

Rather, what they wanted was, as Alec Mateer says in his commentary, a ministry that left the surface of life unruffled. a ministry that left the surface of life unruffled.

When you could go along and emerge out of the meeting and feel that you'd done your duty by God, you'd turned up, but nothing in your life is challenged. You haven't had to deal with the living God, you've kept your distance from Him, you've not been in any danger of seeing Him or hearing from Him, but still you can consider yourself to be one of His followers.

What a tragic picture. The desire for the spiritual leaders of verse 11 was for them to leave the way of the Lord. That meant they wanted to be led in another way, a new way, the development of some kind of new religion, the development of some kind of new morality, and that sounds very familiar to us as well, doesn't it?

[30 : 18] So verse 12, therefore this says the Holy One of Israel, because you despise this word and rely on oppression and perverseness and rely on them. They rebel against Him, they reject His word, but people can never be rid of God.

You can't get rid of Almighty God, you can try to ignore Him, but you can't get rid of Him. He still speaks, and He tells the rebels who will not listen to them, how it's going to be, verse 13, therefore this iniquity shall be like a breach in a high wall bulging out and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly in an instant, and its breaking is like a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments, not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth or to dip up water out of the system.

You see, the catastrophe ahead of Israel in their determined rebellion against the Lord was forecast in these two pictures that Isaiah gives them, two pictures, one of a wall.

Imagine the wall behind me when we came in to the hall this evening. Imagine if we saw a substantial bulge in that wall and dust falling and the plaster coming off it, the bricks exposed, the mortar beginning to fall out between it.

Would David have stood here? I very much doubt it. He would probably have invited somebody else to lead the meeting. you wouldn't stand under a wall like that that was about to collapse. A breach, a bulging wall.

[31 : 53] And then suddenly it collapses under its own weight. That's one picture. The other picture is of a pot being deliberately thrown and smashed. And in these two pictures God was telling his people two things.

First that against, contrary to all their intentions, their sinful rebellion against him would break them. It would be like standing under the bulging wall.

It's the last thing they expected. They were looking for a new way, they were looking for a better life. But their rebellion against the Lord would break them.

And the second thing is that he in judgment would break them. how tragic to see this.

In Leviticus 26, God had promised the blessing of his presence and power. Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand.

[32 : 59] But now that they have rebelled, the promise has been reversed. Verse 17, a thousand shall flee at the threat of one, and at the threat of five you shall flee till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of the mountain, like a signal on a hill.

That's all that would be left of these people because of the rebellion. The wall would collapse on them, like a pot they would be smashed. They would break themselves. Unintentionally, but nonetheless that's what would happen.

And cultures that walk away from the living God break themselves. We don't break God's rules, they break us. A society that rebels against God does not break his rules, they break that society. Now this makes the next verse, 18, absolutely staggering. As we turn from their determination to rebel to the second thing, and I can be briefer with this, because it's magnificent God's determination to rescue.

Verse 18, therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.

[34 : 24] is that absolutely stunning, in the midst of this determination to walk away from God? Not to trust in his power, not to hear from his word, to block our ears and to fancy against him.

Isn't it amazing to find God's determination to rescue people like that? God. I want very briefly, as we close tonight, I want to draw your attention to five characteristics of God's determination to rescue people.

And I hope it will be an encouragement and a blessing to you. Number one, God's determination to rescue is driven by grace. We need to ask ourselves the question, where is the link between human determination to rebel and God's just punishment that comes for that and his determination to rescue?

Why does verse 18 begin with the word therefore? The key word in understanding the link is the word waits.

Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you. Therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. Full of grace and determined to rescue sinners, he is.

[35 : 56] And when we read that he therefore exalts himself to show mercy to you, one of the commentators says that this carries the stunning idea of the Lord our God rising, even standing on tiptoe with a heart bursting to show grace to rebels.

That's some picture of almighty God, isn't it? That's what it means when it says he exalts himself. He's raising himself up. Those who understand the Hebrew better say it's this picture.

He's almost on tiptoe with a heart bursting to show grace to rebels. And that's what God's grace is. It's his sovereign determination to bless the undeserving.

As we get ourselves ready to break bread together on the Lord's day, we are the undeserving. And you can only come to the table if you know you're undeserving.

If you know that you're the recipient of amazing grace. And even tonight God stands on tiptoe with a heart bursting to show grace to rebels.

[37 : 15] So he's determined to rescue. And that determination is driven by grace.

Secondly, that determination is activated by repentance. Verse 18, Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you. Therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who wait for him. For a people shall dwell in Zion and Jerusalem. You shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you.

At the sound of your cry, as soon as he hears it, he answers you. You see the gospel? Isn't it exactly the gospel?

This amazing work of God in rescuing rebels is driven by his grace and is activated by our repentance. It is when we stop running from him and start resting in him when he no longer sees, as it were, our backs but hears our cry.

[38 : 21] He acts towards us in grace. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. And who knows, but even tonight someone in their heart of hearts might be doing business with God and beginning to cry out to him.

As soon as he hears it, he answers you. one of the reasons that people sometimes don't come to the Lord is the thought that he will put their case in the pending file and he'll toy with them and he'll wait to make his decision on what he's going to do.

But amazingly, because of his grace, as soon as he hears it, he answers you. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. Even this waiting on him, even this crying out to him is an ability he has to give us.

His grace is at work to awaken that within us. So if you feel that in your heart tonight, it's a work of God's grace. Determined to rescue, driven by grace, activated by repentance, struggling, evidenced

by obedience.

What's the evidence that God has been at work in your life and rescued you? Jesus said if we loved him, we would do as he commanded. And we see exactly the same in Isaiah chapter 13. Look at verse 20.

[39 : 46] Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of reflection, yet your teacher will not hide himself anymore. But your eyes shall see your teacher, and your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, this is the way, walk in it.

When you turn to the right, or when you turn to the left, then you'll defile your carved idols overlaid with silver, and your gold plated metal images. You'll scatter them as unclean things.

You'll say to them, be gone. You see how the Lord gives his people the affliction that brings them back. Have you known that in your life?

Have you gone through circumstances that have made you, that have just brought you to a place that you would never have been otherwise? Sometimes in his amazing grace and mercy to us, he brings us affliction and brings us back to him.

The affliction that brings us back, followed by the revelation of himself. Though we lose sight of him, he shows himself to us, then the instructions so that we may know how to live, and then he enables us to make the application to our lives.

[40 : 56] And what these verses are speaking about, 20 to 22, is summarized up in the wee hymn that talks about how we tear the dearest idol we've known, tear it from his throne and worship only.

He gives his people the ability to live obediently. It's a sign that he's at work. It's not the sign that we've improved ourselves, it's the sign that he's at work.

God's determination to rescue, driven by grace, activated by repentance, evidenced by obedience, fourthly characterized by blessing. The picture now is of the ultimate future reversal of the curse that our sin brought into God's creation.

So we're now looking not only beyond Isaiah's day, but we're actually looking now in verse 23, beyond our own day. He will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground and bread, and the produce of the ground will be rich and plenteous in the day.

Your livestock will graze in the large pastures. The ox and the donkeys that work the ground will eat season for them, which has been winnowed with shodling for it. And on every lofty mountain and every high hill, verse 25, there will be brooks running with water in the day of great slaughter.

[42 : 15] Coming back to that, when the towers fall. Verse 26, moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun. And the light of the sun will be sevenfold as the light of seven days in the day when the Lord binds up the brokenness of his people and heals the wounds inflicted by his blood.

And heals the wounds inflicted by his blood. These verses give us a picture of a transformed universe where everything again will be as it originally was.

the outshining brilliance of the sun here, seven times stronger than normal. It might be a reference to the Lord's radiant glory, which is central to everything on the day that's being described here.

But this little section of Isaiah 13 is what Paul speaks of in Romans 8. You know when he says in Romans 8, the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

And we're getting a hint of that as Isaiah looks ahead to the blessing that comes when God acts to rescue rebels.

[43 : 42] Our God is a God who is determined to rescue. And that is driven by grace, activated by repentance, evidenced by repentance, characterized by blessing.

Finally, his determination to rescue us is guaranteed by sovereignty. Guaranteed by sovereignty.

Did you notice the word slaughter among the blessings we've just read about? verse 25, And every lofty mountain and every hill there will be brooks running with water in the day of the great slaughter when the towers fall.

And this is pointing to the fact that the way the Lord will bring his people from all the nations, the way he will bring his people into the final eternal blessings that these verses point to, the way that God will bring his eternal people from all the nations of the world into the fruit of his rescue of rebels forever in glory is by the overthrow and destruction of everything that opposes him and everyone who refuses to repent.

It is inescapable in this thing. It's part of how God rescues rebels. When they repent and turn back to him, they're safe forever.

[45 : 16] And what God will one day do is remove us from the context of those who still live in defiant rebellion against him. So verse 27, behold, the name of the Lord comes from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke, his lips are full of fury.

His tongue is like a devouring fire. His breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck to sift the nations with the sip of destruction.

and to place in the jaws of the pupils a bridle that leads us straight. And Romans 1 tells us that he gives them over to their own sinfulness as they refuse to acknowledge him, as they're determined not to trust him, as they're determined not to hear him, as they utterly refuse to repent.

He gives them over to their own sinfulness and to the horrors of it. But that will bring a joyful reality for his people, because this is how God will finally rescue us.

Verse 29, you shall have a song as in the night, when a holy feast is kept and gladness of heart is when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the Lord, to the rock of Israel.

[46 : 46] And the Lord will cause his majestic voice to be heard, and the descending blow of his arm to be seen in furious anger and flame of devouring fire with a cloud burst and storm and hailstones.

it's a picture of the rejoicing of God's people when all that remains in rebellion against him is finally crushed by this almost, if I can use the phrase reverently, almost a pneumatic, crushing hand of God's judgment upon it, like a tambourine.

And then Isaiah brings us back to his day. The enemies facing his generation of God's people, the Assyrians, in the form of Sennacherib, who was about to attack, and from whom Israel was running pathetically to Egypt.

Look at verse 31, the Assyrians will be terror stricken, as the voice of the Lord when he strikes with his rod. And every stroke of the appointed staff the Lord lays on them will be to the sound of tambourine and lyres, battling with brandished arm, he will fight with them.

The final eternal rescue of God's people is guaranteed by the fact that God is working out his sovereign purposes that have long since been prepared.

[48 : 16] God's not making things up as he goes along. He's not adjusting his policies according to what's happening on this planet. He is working out his purposes as his year succeeds to year.

His eternal counsel. The Assyrians were a terrifying enemy to Israel. But as the Assyrian king was battling down towards Jerusalem with plans to conquer and destroy, little did he know that he was climbing his own funeral pyre.

Verse 33, for a burning place has long been prepared. Indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep in wine, with fire and wood in abundance, the breath of the Lord like a stream of sulfur kindles it.

Yes, there are those who ignore the breath of the Lord all their life, his word, who refuse to trust it, who refuse to tumpit it, who refuse to hear it.

But you cannot edit God out of the universe. And in the end, the breath of the Lord like a stream of sulfur kindles it.

[49 : 29] And so it will be for all those who remain determined to rebel, who refuse to repent, who refuse to return, who refuse to rest in the Lord.

And that's how he'll rescue his people from the menacing presence of those who do not repent and do not rest in the Lord. There can be no salvation without judgment.

That's why the cross of Christ is so glorious. That's why the cross of our Redeemer is so precious, where wrath and mercy meet, where judgment and salvation meet.

The judgment that Jesus bore on the cross is our salvation. I want to close in verse 18.

Isn't the Lord here in verse 18, waiting to be gracious to you, exalting himself to show mercy to you?

[50 : 32] The Lord is a God of justice, blessed are those who wait for him. Isn't the Lord here in verse 18, like the father that the Lord Jesus will later speak of in Luke 15, watching, waiting for his rebel son to return.

And when he was still a long way off, you know that story, don't you, his father saw the son and ran towards him and embraced him and kissed him and welcomed him.

That father was exalting himself on tiptoes with a heart bursting with grace towards the river. father. And that's the very picture of God our heavenly father here.

