

June 11, 2023

“God Reigns”
Lesson 1

Isaiah 52:7-12

Intro

In the ancient world, a herald was the one who announced the decrees from the king, or news of war or peace. Their jobs were to pass on information. In the book of Isaiah, chapters 40-55 are essentially showing a herald announcing news: the good news of a coming restoration with God and a return to Jerusalem for those who have been exiles in Babylon.

Read Isaiah 52:7-12

1. vs. 7: This verse speaks of those who announce good news
 - They are proclaiming peace, good tidings, and salvation
 - These are encouraging things to a people who have been in exile for so long
 - They are described as speaking these things “on the mountains”
 - This spot allows their voices to be heard a far distance
 - It also contrasts Israel, which is mountainous, to Babylon, which has flat plains
 - The last thing announced is “Your God reigns!”
 - This is both a reminder and an encouragement
 - God continues to reign, even (especially) during the dark and hard times
 - People who trust in God have hope when things are most challenging

2. vs. 8: The reference to a watchman has two aspects to it
 - The watchmen here are shouting for joy—something good has happened
 - It seems like Jerusalem’s walls have been rebuilt and the watchmen stand guard
 - They rejoice over the people returning to Jerusalem from exile
 - Prophets are also referred to as watchmen in Jer. 6:17, Ezek. 3:17, and Ezek. 33:7)
 - The prophets are known for messages of warning
 - Here the message is one of hope and redemption
 - The phrase “will see it with their own eyes” is literally in Hebrew “eye to eye”
 - We tend to use the phrase “face to face”
 - This indicates clear unhindered communication between two parties
 - God had punished and separated Himself from Israel
 - Now He is calling them back and resuming His communion with them
 - All His people will see His mighty deeds “with their own eyes”

3. vs. 9: One of the works the people are seeing is noted at the end of the verse
 - God “comforted His people” and “redeemed Jerusalem”
 - The people’s response to this restoration is worship through singing
 - The NIV says they “burst into songs”—they can’t contain their joy
 - The people and the places that were “ruined” have been redeemed

4. vs. 10: The image here is one of power and might
The Lord will “lay bare his holy arm”
Think of someone showing off their muscles by pulling up their shirt sleeve
God has the authority (right to do) and the power (ability to do)
He will punish those who have afflicted His people—here, likely Babylon
God usually uses people to accomplish His will
If no one is found to be suitable, He will do it Himself
“In the sight of all the nations” and “all the ends of the earth” indicate the scope
This could refer to all the known world hearing about God’s deliverance
This could also refer to making Christ known to all people
5. vs. 11: The verse begins with the command to “Depart, depart, go out from there!”
This is referring to leaving Babylon and returning to Jerusalem
It also reminds us of the exodus, of leaving Egypt to go back to Israel
The people are called to leave a place of suffering, led by God’s mercy
They are also commanded to “Touch no unclean thing”
They are carrying back to Israel the temple articles taken to Babylon
These articles have been used for ungodly purposes
Instead, they should have been treated with respect and honor
Those carrying the articles are commanded to keep themselves clean
This will prevent them from disrespecting the articles and God
The larger picture is that the people, the objects, and Jerusalem itself will be refit for the
proper worship of God within the rebuilt temple
6. vs. 12: There is both an echo and a contrast between this departure and the exodus from Egypt
In Egypt, the people were told to eat in haste and leave in haste
They were pursued by the Egyptian army as well
Here the people are told they will not need to leave in haste
Babylon has fallen, and the people are being allowed to leave
No enemy army will be pursuing them
In both cases, God promises to be with them
He says He will go before them, and be a rear guard for them

Application: The prophets shared God’s messages with the people. Those that gave hope were especially needed to a people that had little or no hope that things would change for the better. That is still true today. The Good News of salvation in Christ brings hope to those who need it, and gratitude and joy to those who share that message. God used His prophets as messengers of good news then; we are called to be messengers and proclaimers of the Good News now.

Prayer: Father God, strengthen our hearts to do Your will in sharing the Good News of salvation in Christ to those who are lost and feel hopeless. In Jesus’ name, Amen.