

## God Reigns

Adrian lowered the bullhorn and let out a long sigh. Then the room went back to the loud, fevered, and nervous-mixed-with-angry kind of a sound. Adrian's feet were tired. His head was throbbing, and he was hungry! He was 45 minutes away from his lunch break.

Some of the carnival riders, along with some of their family and friends were waiting in the large room. There had been a malfunction with the Octopus ride. An arm had come loose, throwing several people on the ground and jarring everyone else on the ride. Screams and shouts followed. Now, two hours later, the carnival company was still assessing the damage, talking to riders and getting their contact information.

From what Adrian understood there were no serious injuries, but many people were transported to the hospital for treatment and observation. Adrian, who had only been on the job for one month, immediately prayed for everyone's well-being once he learned about the accident.

He closed his eyes again, shutting out the noise and trying to block the stress of the day. "God, You are all powerful and sovereign," Adrian prayed. "Show Yourself strong. Please be with us during this unfortunate incident."

Adrian raised the bullhorn back to his mouth. "For those who would like lunch, it is being provided in the blue room. Please see a hostess for directions."

**1.** *Describe how you felt in a situation where you faced great danger, hardship, or loss.*

**2.** *Were you a Christian at the time? If so, how did your faith in God sustain you through that crisis?*

**3.** *After walking with the Lord, do you trust Him more, or do you still think He might not be there for you when you need Him? Explain your answer.*

## Awake to the Good News

*Isaiah 52:7-10, KJV*

7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

9 Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

*Isaiah 52:7-10, NIV*

<sup>7</sup>How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of those who bring  
good news,  
who proclaim peace,  
who bring good tidings,  
who proclaim salvation,  
who say to Zion,  
“Your God reigns!”

<sup>8</sup>Listen! Your watchmen lift up  
their voices;  
together they shout for joy.  
When the LORD returns to Zion,  
they will see it with their own  
eyes.

<sup>9</sup>Burst into songs of joy together,  
you ruins of Jerusalem,  
for the LORD has comforted his  
people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD will lay bare his holy  
arm  
in the sight of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth will  
see  
the salvation of our God.

At this point in Isaiah’s prophecy, Zion—Jerusalem—has taken quite a beating. Physical destruction is certainly coming, Isaiah warns, as a judgment against Israel’s rebellion and disregard for their covenant with God. This is not the first time Zion has taken a beating, either.

Isaiah presents Zion here many years in the future, after its fall, as a city in ruins. It is destroyed, with many of its

occupants killed or dragged away to exile. For all intents and purposes, Zion is worthless in its own helplessness. It is a time of stress and chaos, and surely those remaining in the city feel as though they are forgotten and abandoned by even God Himself. Their dreams and plans for a future as God's people are nothing but a memory, and it is their own fault, a result of their sin.

And yet, Isaiah declares there is hope for this ruined city. Amidst the chaos, a messenger appears on a distant mountain, bringing good news to a despondent people. The sentries on the crumbling walls take up the shout, overflowing with joy and relief.

What is this good news in the face of chaos and stress? God is still on His throne and will redeem His people. Yes, despite every difficult circumstance, Zion's God still reigns. God has returned to His dwelling place of Jerusalem, intending to redeem rather than to ruin, to deliver rather than to destroy. The captives will be freed from exile in Babylon, the enemy will be driven away, and the splendor of the city will be restored (52:1-2). In contrast to how Zion sees herself, as worthless and beaten down, God still sees Zion as His own people, beautiful and worthy of redemption. This passage is a call to awaken to the good news of Zion's redemption.

This good news is proclaimed even by the city itself, as the ruins burst into song. Everyone can see that God has returned to His dwelling place, to His people. They are comforted by God's keeping of His promises. They are redeemed from their captivity, just as they were redeemed before from the Egyptians and Assyrians (52:3-4). God has acted in such a mighty way that every nation will take notice and recognize that His power, and His power alone, took His people through such a stressful and chaotic time.

**4.** *What is the good news in Isaiah's prophecy?*

**5.** *Why would God redeem His people after exile?*

## A Second Exodus

*Isaiah 52:11-12, KJV*

11 Depart ye, depart ye,  
go ye out from thence,  
touch no unclean thing; go  
ye out of the midst of her;  
be ye clean, that bear the  
vessels of the LORD.

12 For ye shall not go  
out with haste, nor go by  
flight: for the LORD will go  
before you; and the God of  
Israel will be your reward.

*Isaiah 52:11-12, NIV*

<sup>11</sup>Depart, depart, go out from  
there!

Touch no unclean thing!  
Come out from it and be pure,  
you who carry the articles of  
the LORD's house.

<sup>12</sup>But you will not leave in haste  
or go in flight;  
for the LORD will go before you,  
the God of Israel will be your  
rear guard.

The command to “Depart, depart” echoes the beginning of Isaiah 52, where Zion is told to “Awake, awake.” The further command, to “go out,” brings to mind images of the Exodus, when Israel was freed from their captivity in Egypt. This allusion is not accidental or coincidental, but an intentional image of hope from God through Isaiah. There will be a second exodus, a second exit from captivity and oppression under a foreign nation.

However, there are some significant differences between this exodus and the one from Egypt. The Egyptian exodus took place quickly, as the Israelites needed to hurry before the Egyptian army pursued them. They were to eat the Passover meal “with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s Passover” (Exod. 12:11). This next exodus, however, will be a slower exit—they will not “leave in haste or go in flight” (Isa. 52:12).

Additionally, what they bring with them will be different than the first exodus. When they fled from Egypt, the Israelites were told to take everything they could from the Egyptians. They asked for and received articles of silver and gold, clothing, and large droves of livestock (Exod. 12:35, 38). In this exodus, in contrast, Israel will

leave everything unclean behind, carrying only the articles of the Lord's house with them. God calls the priests and Levites "you who carry the articles of the LORD's house"—to "come out from it and be pure" (Isa. 52:11), which means to leave behind the Babylonian system of idolatry and occult practices that had helped ruin the nation of Israel (47:11–15).

Despite these differences from the first exodus, there is one significant similarity: in both instances, the presence of God goes with the refugees. Just as God traveled with the Israelites from Egypt, manifesting His presence through columns of fire and smoke, God "will go before you" and "be your rear guard" (Isa. 52:12) as they return from Babylon. Through this, God will receive glory among all the nations.

There is more being left behind in the exodus than merely Babylon and the "unclean" things. There is a sense, as Isaiah calls Israel to "go out from there," that Israel is being called to return to their covenant, to once again be a community in covenant with God. Paul alludes to a similar meaning in 2 Corinthians 6:17, as he warns against idolatry and calls followers of Christ to step out of darkness and into light. This summons is an invitation for Israel to have a fresh start, leaving behind their idolatry

and rebellion, living fully in the presence of God.

**6. Why does the allusion to the Exodus from Egypt bring hope?**

**7. What is significant about Israel taking the articles of the Lord's house with them?**



*These Egyptian gold and silver vessels may be like some of the objects from the temple that the exiles brought back to Jerusalem.*

*Photo: Theodore M. Davis Collection, Bequest of Theodore M. Davis, 1915*

## Shame or Celebration?

Carlita wasn't married when she got pregnant and gave birth to her baby, Gabby. Her family was horrified. They were Christians and leaders in the church. Not knowing how to break the news without breaking their reputation, they kept the pregnancy a secret, even after she was born. Although they didn't receive guests, one afternoon an aunt stopped by. When Carlita returned from a doctor's appointment with Gabby. The aunt saw them and drew the correct conclusion.

Realizing that their secret had been revealed, Carlita and her mother began to cry. But Rosita, the aunt, asked to hold the baby. Cradling Gabby, Rosita smiled, held the baby's tiny hand, and kissed her on the forehead. "Little one," she said, "the world is full of mistakes, but you are not one of them. May God Himself show you His purpose and make you a blessing to our family. Welcome, Gabriella."

Every day people make mistakes, but God is able to bring joy and blessing from them all. Sometimes we can be so overwhelmed by our guilt and shame, and so worried about what other people will think, that we miss the opportunity to glorify God for His forgiveness and enjoy the blessings He brings into our lives. If we share with others how we have been forgiven, they can rejoice with us in God's gracious restoration of our lives.

**8.** *When is a time you knew you made the wrong decision, but God brought blessing out of it anyway?*

**9.** *How easy is it to admit your mistakes or areas of temptation to others? What are you afraid will happen if you do?*

**10.** *How do you respond when someone confesses a sin or weakness to you?*

**11.** *What are some ways you can point toward celebration of God's grace rather than condemnation for sin?*

## Living by Faith, Not by Sight

According to 2 Corinthians 5:7, “We live by faith and not by sight.” We are blessed to live after the first coming of Christ. However, we need to live patiently by faith until His second coming, when our faith will change to sight.

► *List two areas in your life where you have to walk by faith now, not seeing how God will work those out for you. Then think of two examples in which you walked by faith in the past, but God resolved those so that you now see His blessing.*

*Two areas where you must currently walk by faith:*

*Two areas where you can now see how God has resolved those issues:*

### KEY VERSE

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! —Isaiah 52:7, KJV

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!” —Isaiah 52:7, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

**Week of June 5 through June 11**

**(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)**

- Mon.** Ezekiel 47:1-12—The River of Life.
- Tues.** John 16:19-33—Receiving Everlasting Joy.
- Wed.** James 3:13-18—The Right Kind of Spirit.
- Thurs.** Psalm 4—Peace Amid Distress.
- Fri.** Psalm 46—God Is Our Refuge.
- Sat.** Ephesians 2:11-22—Christ Is Our Peace.
- Sun.** Isaiah 65:17-25—A New Heaven and Earth.