

Scripture Text

Isaiah 43.22-44.23

Context

Isaiah was enabled by God to address the Jewish captives far away in Babylon in sixth century B.C. He announces a promise that God is coming with a world-changing display of his glory (40:5). To prepare for his coming, the exiles must return to the Promised Land (48:20). They must not be demoralized by the impressive but empty culture of idolatry in which they live (41:21–24), nor should they resent God's use of a pagan conqueror, Cyrus the Great, as their liberator from Babylon (44:24–28). They must look by faith for a greater liberator still to come, the messianic "Servant of the Lord" (see note on 42:1–9). He will bring justice to the nations (42:1–4) and save his people from their ultimate captivity, the guilt of sin (52:13–53:12).

Observation and Meaning

- 43.22-24: What does God list as the reasons for the nation's spiritual illness? List all of them.
- 43.25-28: What does God say He will do to resolve this situation? Why is this the most fundamental thing that needs to be done by God? What does it mean for God to 'blot out' sins? How is this fulfilled in Jesus?
- 44.1-4: What does God promise to do here? What New Testament passages does this remind you of? How is this fulfilled in Jesus?
- 44.5: What does the outpouring of the Spirit result in in v5? What NT passages speak similarly about how the Spirit brings assurance to us (look at Rom 8)
- 44.6-20: What is ironic about the worship of idols in v9-20, and how does that contrast with God in v6-8?
- 44.21-23: How are we encouraged to respond in these verses? How does this help us to avoid spiritual death?

Big Idea

Distance from God is not his faithlessness to us, but our casual attitude to him. Nevertheless, he deals with our sins and pours out his Spirit upon us, that we might rejoice in him.

Connecting to Bible Storyline

Even though God's people have sinned against him and are undergoing discipline as a result, God is committed to them, to save them from their sins and refresh their weary souls.

Sermon Outline

1. The reality of spiritual death - apathy towards God (43.22-24)
 - a. Prayerlessness
 - b. Insincere Worship
 - c. Casual towards sin
2. The remedy that leads to life (43.25-44.5)
 - a. Forgiveness of sins through judgment
 - b. Refreshing by the Spirit
3. The reason why there is no other way - there is no God like ours (44.6-20)
4. The reminder: how to stay revived (44.21-23)
 - a. Remember
 - b. Return
 - c. Rejoice

Applications

- Lack of prayer, failure to rightly worship God, and persistence in sin are listed as reasons for spiritual death in 43.22-24. Which of these do you struggle with and why? How does this passage warn you about this?
- How does God's answer of forgiven sins, refreshment and assurance through the outpouring of the Spirit encourage you to draw near to Him? How do you plan to do so?
- What false gods are you personally tempted to trust in? How does 44.6-20 remind you of the folly of trusting in false gods? What will you do this week to turn away from them?
- 44.21-23 give 3 simple things to do to stay close to God. How do you plan to work these into your life this coming week?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?

What is the situation of the author and of the readers?

Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?

Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.