

THE LORD'S LEADING AND KEEPING (Is. 48:12-17)

This chapter begins as a reprimand to the twelve tribes of the house of Jacob (v.1). Because of their sin God had divided them into two kingdoms during King Rehoboam's reign, - the ten tribes of the northern kingdom and the two tribes of the southern kingdom. Rehoboam was the grandson of King David, the son of King Solomon, and he received the legacy of a prosperous and peaceful nation. However, both the northern and the southern kingdoms adopted forms of idolatry which virtually destroyed the worship of Jehovah. After repeated warnings they would not return to Him and repent, so God declared, [Is. 47:11](#) Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

However, though disobedient, God's grace towards them persisted, [Is. 48:10](#) Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. [11](#) For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. ... And then He proclaims the words of great hope, [Is. 48:12](#) Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. [13](#) Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. [14](#) All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. [15](#) I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. [16](#) Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me. [17](#) Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

This chapter deals with the repatriation of God's people, - albeit, under the authority of a foreign Gentile power. God's greater plan, though, was in motion for His promises extend to forever, - they are sure and steadfast, - and He never changes His mind or 'goes back' on His word. The children of Israel had seen how He had promised Moses He would take His people out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, and He did it. When they were in Babylon, He promised He would return them to Jerusalem, and He did. Even though the land was taken from them and they have been ruled by various Gentile nations, He promised it would become there's again ... and we are living in times when God honoured, - and *is* honouring, - the promise He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ... and in Is. 48 He is telling His people, [20](#) Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, *with a voice of singing declare ye*, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob. [21](#) And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

God keeps His word ... Terry and Mary are ‘going home’, and the Lord has chosen the timing and the circumstances for this to happen. I remember a number of years ago, after Terry had finished his Bible course, he wondered if the Lord might lead them somewhere, out of the area. He came to a firm conclusion though, that it was not to be ... not at that time. ... But now the Lord *is* bringing them home.

God is intricately involved with His people. Look at the intimacy, **Is. 48:12** *Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called ... He knows us by name ... Listen, obey, pay attention, O Jacob and Israel.* Back in the Jewish history, Jacob and Israel were the same person ... Jacob was the son of Isaac and Rebekah, but God gave him a new name, **Gen. 32:28** *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*

This was a truly personal relationship God had with His people ... He knew them individually and personally, and He watched over them every step of the way ... and the endorsement which guaranteed them as belonging to Him was signed by God Himself, **Is. 48:12** *I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.* ... The Lord brought them from their homeland to Babylon, and He was returning them. ... In no way am I suggesting Scotland was Terry and Mary’s ‘Babylon’, and they are returning to Swansea, - the ‘holy city’ or ‘new Jerusalem’ ... but what I am trying to say is that God has been with them, kept them, and guided them for forty-one years here. Indeed, God has endorsed their time in this fellowship, and now He says, it’s time to go home.

The same God Who declared, **13** *Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together ...* is the God Who looks after each one of His people. Their welfare is His concern, and no matter where the journey takes us, He knows the way and when He has brought us through the joys and the sorrows, we shall come forth a people unto His glory. ... And what a promise He makes, **17** *Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. ... Do you see *the three titles* in that verse? ...*

God is our REDEEMER. Long before time began, in the secret place of His own presence ... long before there was anyone or anything else ... God decreed the plan of our salvation. Before even the earth was formed, and before any sin of man was committed, He designed a work which would be to His glory. It included His Son, and it also included you and me, for aware of the sin which would pollute our nature, He had a means of salvation already prepared.

That salvation was purchased on our account at Calvary for there, Jesus died to take our sins away, to be our propitiation. All the punishment our sins would inevitably accumulate was taken and laid upon our Saviour for “There was none other good

enough to pay the price of sin” ... And the Father, - in agreement with His Son, - transferred our punishment upon Him so that each of us who knows Him as Saviour can truly say, *Jesus died for me*. ... What God did for us through His Son is practical, personal, and powerful for He Himself redeemed us. He paid the purchase-price so that we have been bought back by our Heavenly Father since Jesus dealt with all our sins on the cross, and because of what He did we are now the eternal children of God.

How did it happen? Did I show Him I could become good enough to warrant salvation? No, not at all because salvation is wholly and completely **Eph. 1:6** *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*. ... And there is coming a day when we shall go to be with Him, and He will know us because He loved us and died for us and we have His seal of salvation by which He has set us set us free and set us apart. ... If He is our Lord and Master, and if we are serving Him, it's because He is our **Redeemer** and He has washed our sins away.

He is our TEACHER. He has a purpose for your life, the ultimate of which is to bring Him glory. That is why He has saved us, and He has established a path in front of us by which we should walk. ... And there is no such thing as being a Christian according to our own rules. Sometimes the mention of rules can put people off from becoming a Christian ... but rules are necessary to everything we are and do. And the rule for being a Christian is following Christ, and to follow Him the way He wants us to is found in His Word, **Ps. 199:105** *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path ... 86:11* *Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.*

... There is no other way to be a Christian apart from obedience to God's Word. Sometimes it is 'out of kilter' with the world. Sometimes they don't understand why we are different, but we *are* because we are a new creation in the Lord Jesus, and the old things we used to do that are not appropriate for a child of God, we don't do them anymore. ... And you don't do them anymore because God in His Word is teaching you, and that is why you must read it, take it in and live it out! ... And the Word in itself is not sufficient, but the Word of God shining into your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit *is*. He shows you how the Scriptures from beginning to end are God-breathed, Holy Spirit inspired, Christ glorifying, and men and women edifying!

Notice how God addressed these wayward people, **18** *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: 19* *Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me*. ... If only they had paid attention to the light which was shining on them, as God's word came through the prophets! ... They would have saved themselves so much unnecessary heartache ... They would have been as peaceful as the quietly flowing river, as calm and beautiful as the waves of the sea, and multiplied as the sand. God's purposes, -

His *instinct*, - concerning His people, as Jeremiah wrote, are ‘thoughts of peace, and not of evil’ (Jer. 29:11). He is our omniscient Teacher, - there is not a *thing* He does not know, and to listen to Him is the best direction to take in life. ... He is our **Redeemer**, our **Teacher** ...

He is our LEADER. God led His people into captivity, - there is no other reason they were there. Yes, Nebuchadnezzar had brought them as prisoners to Babylon ... but he never would have done it if God had not allowed him ... and planned it!

Sometimes, when we are going through an uncertain period in our lives, we wonder where God is leading. It is not always clear ... there is the ‘mist and cloud’ and it is difficult to make out the direction to take. And we are afraid of wandering aimlessly and ending up somewhere we ought not to be ... and all kinds of problems crowd in around us. ... But remember how the Lord has been faithful in leading you in the past ... John Newton wrote the old hymn in which he said, “He Who has helped me hitherto Will help me all my journey through”. ... And how many times have you found yourself in a precarious place, and the Lord, - nevertheless, - has brought you through? ... We don’t go anywhere on our own for He will neither leave us nor forsake us. “My Lord [*even*] knows the way through the wilderness” ... and all *we* have to do is keep on following.

We don’t always know what is ‘around the corner’, but our God does. Even before we arrive, He already has it prepared ... and because His way is always best, we can say with Paul, **II Tim. 1:12** [I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.](#) ... “Jesus, tender Shepherd, lead me ... Through the darkness, be Thou near ... All this day Thy hand hath led me, And I thank Thee for Thy care”.

Is. 48:17 [Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.](#) The Lord is leading Terry and Mary into a new chapter as they return to Wales ... and He is leading each one of us who remain here *also*. Another hymn says, “Where He may lead me I will go, For I have learned to trust Him so”. That is the only way to reach our destination, and may we continue to travel in the Lord’s company! Amen.