

THE SAVIOUR'S CRY OF SALVATION: LISTEN! WAKE UP! DEPART! ISAIAH 51:17–52:12

Introduction

Listen! Wake up! Depart! These are three admonitions most of us hear often in our lives. Parents, supervisors, teachers, politicians, preachers or even just friends are always encouraging or warning us to listen, to wake up, to leave, to move on.

These three imperatives are the subject of the present Scripture. Remember that Isaiah is looking into the future, predicting the coming Babylonian Captivity and the liberation of the Jews by the Persian king, Cyrus. Earlier, God's prophet had addressed the unfaithful in Israel (48:1-22). Now he addresses the faithful, those who seek the LORD and His righteousness. During their captivity, the Jews would endure terrible hardship and almost break under the weight of their suffering. But the LORD had a wonderful message for them, telling them exactly what to do to prepare for the future He had planned for them. This chapter is that message, a message for all the faithful who truly believe and follow the LORD. This is, *The Saviour's Cry of Salvation: Listen! Wake Up! Depart! 51:1-52:12*.

- I. Listen to the LORD! Take note, you who seek the LORD and His righteousness (vv. 51:1-8).
- II. Wake up, wake up, O LORD! Help your people (vv. 51:9-16).
- III. Wake up, wake up, O Jerusalem! You (the redeemed) will be set free from captivity: a picture of the believer being freed from sin and death (vv. 51:17-52:10).
- IV. Depart, depart! Flee the captivity of Babylon: a picture of spiritual separation (vv. 52:11-12).

I. *Isaiah 51:17–52:10* Wake up, Wake up, O Jerusalem

Wake up, wake up, O Jerusalem! You — the redeemed of Jerusalem — will be set free from captivity. In these verses, the great city of Jerusalem is pictured as a mother whose children have been killed in war or else taken captive. As a result, there is no one left to help her. She has drained the cup of God's wrath, and now she staggers in a drunken stupor. But the LORD gives her great hope, the hope that her children would be freed from captivity and return home to give her a new beginning. For that reason, the mother should awaken and prepare for her returning children. The LORD Himself challenged the city to awaken, giving Jerusalem and its citizens three wake-up calls. (51:17-23; 52:1-10). Note the Scripture and outline:

1. Jerusalem must wake up from the stupor caused by suffering God's judgment (vv. 17-23). Because of the people's wickedness and idolatry, the cup of God's righteous wrath had been given to the city, and the citizens had drunk the LORD's fury to the last drop. They had no choice, for they were guilty of the most heinous sins
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against the LORD. Sadly, the city had no capable sons or leaders to guide the people (v. 18), and most of the people were living selfish, wicked lives, disobeying the commandments of God. There were not enough righteous leaders to keep God's judgment from falling upon the nation, and there was no one to stand in the gap as a mediator between the people and God.

As a result, the cup of God's judgment was poured out upon the city (v. 19). Jerusalem suffered a double calamity — desolation and destruction, famine and sword. Isaiah predicted that the Babylonian war machine would march across the land of Judah and leave the nation utterly devastated. The young men of Jerusalem would fall in the street, dying either at the enemy's hands or from hunger (v. 20). And Jerusalem would be like an antelope caught in a net, unable to escape its coming death.

But judgment was not the last word from the LORD. He offered wonderful hope to the city of Jerusalem and invited the citizens to hear His marvellous promises (vv. 21-23). Note who was making these promises: "your Lord," "the LORD," and "your God." What was being stressed is the sovereignty of God, His power and control over all things, including the affairs of people and nations. His sovereign power and the fact that He was their God guaranteed that He would fulfil these promises to the city of Jerusalem and its citizens. He gave four specific promises:

- => The LORD would defend His people (the redeemed, vv. 11-16). Since He was their God and possessed sovereign power, He was bound to defend them.
- => The LORD would remove the cup of judgment — His discipline and chastisement — from the people (v. 22). His discipline would not last forever. He disciplined His people only to correct them, to stir them up to forsake their sins and return to Him in repentance.
- => The LORD would transfer the cup of judgment to the persecutors and oppressors of His people, and they would reap the torment and terror they had sown (v. 23).
- => The LORD would cause the redeemed to be victorious over all their enemies (v. 23). They would be more than conquerors.

Thought 1. A victorious life is one of the great promises God makes to believers. No matter what we face, a simple trial or a terrible hardship, persecution or even enslavement, the LORD promises to be with us and to meet our every need. Conquering, overcoming, triumphing over all the trials and temptations of life is possible through the LORD's presence and strength. Listen to the wonderful promises of God's Word:

Lk 21:18 "But not a hair of your head will perish."

Rom 8:35, 37-39 *Who shall separate us from the love [compassion] of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am*

convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Cor 2:14 *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*

2 Cor 10:3-5 *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

2 Tim 1:12 *That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Heb 13:5-6 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

1 Pet 5:7 *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*

1 John 5:4-5 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Gen. 28:15 *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*

2 Chr 16:9 *For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.*

Psa 34:7 *The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.*

Psa 44:5 *Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes.*

Psa 91:4 *He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

Psa 91:5 *You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day.*

Psa 112:7 *They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord.*

Prov 3:24 *When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*

Isa 25:4 *You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall.*

2. The city of Jerusalem must wake up and be clothed with splendour and strength (52:1-6). It was not enough for Jerusalem to put off the stupor caused by drinking God's wrath. It must also put on the beautiful garment of splendour and strength, the only garment suitable for *the Holy City* of God. Five reasons are given why Jerusalem must reclothe itself:
 - a. Jerusalem must put on new garments because it is the Holy City (v. 1). To be *holy* means to be set apart to God, to be distinct and different in morality and righteousness. Note that the *uncircumcised*, which refers to unbelievers, and the unclean will no longer be allowed to enter Jerusalem. This is a clear indication that this prophecy refers to the Messiah's kingdom. When Jesus Christ returns to set up God's kingdom on earth, Jerusalem will be the seat of God's worldwide government.
 - b. Jerusalem must put on new garments because it is to arise from the dust (v. 2). Not only during the Babylonian captivity but also down through the centuries, Jerusalem has suffered bondage, oppression and destruction time and again. But in the Messiah's kingdom, the city will sit enthroned as the capital of the world, never again to be held captive by a foreign nation or people. In that day, Jerusalem will definitely be the *Holy City*, the very seat of God's government and kingdom on earth.
 - c. Jerusalem must put on new garments because it will be redeemed without money, set free totally by God's grace (v. 3). Nation after nation had conquered Jerusalem throughout history, yet none had paid the Jews for the right to rule over them. But the day was coming when God Himself would provide redemption for the city. Clearly, this is a reference to the redemption provided through the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - d. Jerusalem must put on new garments because suffering had tainted God's people (vv. 4-5). Centuries earlier, the Israelites had been enslaved by Egypt. More recently, they had been oppressed by Assyria, and now they were about to be exiled to Babylon. Through all these terrible enslavements, God's people were persecuted, mocked and forced to hear God's name blasphemed and cursed all day long. Living in the midst of such foul behaviour and language contaminated the people, even true believers. Thus, Jerusalem and its people must awaken and put on new clothing, the clothing of God's righteousness.
 - e. Jerusalem must put on new garments because God's people will know the LORD's name, know Him personally (v. 6). The new clothing is the redemption provided by the Lord Jesus Christ. To be accepted in the Messiah's kingdom, people must *put on* the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and the redemption He provides.

Rom 13:14 *Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Eph 4:22-32 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin:" Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. "Let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word, nor unwholesome or worthless talk [ever] come out of your mouth." And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

3. The city of Jerusalem must wake up and listen to the watchmen's proclamation of the good news (vv. 7-10). The runner who brought good news was the messenger who raced from a battlefield with the latest news of victory or defeat. The watchmen were people within the city appointed to stand watch, looking for the arrival of the messengers bringing their news. In the present case, the news was coming from the LORD Himself. He had *good news* to be proclaimed to His people. Keep in mind that the Israelites had been taken captive and scattered all over the Babylonian Empire. All the cities of Judah had been destroyed and the land devastated. Jerusalem itself lay in shambles, utterly ruined. Thus, when God challenged the city to listen to the watchmen's proclamation, the Jews scattered throughout the Babylonian Empire experienced a great anticipation rising in their hearts. The runner brought the glorious news that King Cyrus of Persia had defeated Babylon and was now freeing the Jews to return to their homeland. Thus, the feet of the messenger bringing such wonderful news were beautiful. The message sent by God had four aspects:
 - ⇒ The message was the good news of peace and salvation (v. 7). The LORD reigns over the earth, and He had proven His sovereign power by saving His people. They were free to return to the promised land.
 - ⇒ The message was the good news of the LORD's return to Zion, or Jerusalem (v. 8). When Christ returns to earth, Jerusalem will be the seat of both government and religion. Every eye on earth will see Christ and witness the glory of His person and kingdom.
 - ⇒ The message is the good news of the LORD's comfort and redemption (v. 9). No greater comfort can come to the human soul than that of salvation. Being saved from the bondages of this world brings comfort to the human soul.

=> The message was the good news that the ends of the earth would see God's salvation (v. 10). Isaiah prophesied that God's arm of power would rise against Babylon, destroy the enemy of His people, and set His people free. Note the reference to the *ends of the earth*. This points to the Messiah's kingdom, the time when Christ will return to set up God's kingdom on earth. When He returns, He will exercise His absolute power against all the brutal, wicked nations of earth in the battle that is commonly called Armageddon (see notes, Rev 19:17-21).

Thought 1. The good news of salvation is to be proclaimed around the world. God loves the world and everyone in it. Therefore He longs to save us all. This was the very purpose for which He sent His Son into the world. Christ was not sent to condemn us but to save us. This is the wonderful message of salvation through Christ:

John 3:16-18 *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*

John 10:9-10 *"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

Acts 4:12 *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

Rom 5:8-9 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

Eph 2:8-9 *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

1 Th 5:9 *For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Heb 5:8-9 *Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered. And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

Heb 9:28 *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

II. **Isaiah 52:11–12** *Depart! Flee the Captivity of Babylon: A Picture of Spiritual Separation*

Depart, depart! Flee the captivity of Babylon. When liberty was proclaimed, God's people were to immediately leave the land of their bondage. They were to get out and

never return because Babylon was the epitome of wickedness and idolatry. Babylonian society was steeped in the pollutions of this world:

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|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|
| => sexual immorality | => discord | => greed | => impurity |
| => prejudice | => covetousness | => debauchery | => jealousy |
| => injustice | => idolatry | => rage | => envy |
| => witchcraft | => hostility | => drunkenness | => hatred |
| => selfish ambition | => orgies | | |

Babylon was no place for God's people. Believers were to turn away from the sinful nation and its people and return to the promised land. They were not to touch any unclean thing nor were they to take any unclean thing — whether behaviour or object — with them. They were to make a complete break from the world of their captivity. They were not to continue or even be reminded of the wicked world that had held them in bondage.

Note that priests in particular were to keep themselves pure, for they would be carrying the holy vessels (utensils) and furnishings that belonged in Jerusalem's temple. Cyrus would return the holy vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken as plunder from the temple (Ezr 1:7). Handling the holy vessels of the LORD was a very special privilege that God had given the priests. Therefore, the priests were to prepare themselves for the task through ritual cleansing (see notes, Num 3:5-13; 2 Chr 5:2-10).

God gave His people a wonderful promise: they would not be threatened or forced to flee as they left Babylon. Centuries before when the Israelites were set free by the Egyptians, they had to flee for their lives (Exo 12:33-39; see note, Exo 14:5-12). Although they did not have to flee from this captivity, God's people were not to linger. The LORD instructed them to depart *immediately*, to make haste to get out of Babylon (the world). If they would leave the world of wickedness and false worship without delay, God would personally go before them and guide them, and He would grant His presence as a rear guard to protect them. With His guidance and protection, they would reach the promised land.

Thought 1. Note this important fact: the events described above had not yet taken place when God's prophet Isaiah was predicting them. Think about this fact for a moment. It would be more than 150 years before King Cyrus defeated Babylon and set God's people free. This is an astounding prophecy and clear proof of the accuracy of God's Holy Word. What God is saying in this passage is of paramount importance, and it is applicable to believers of all generations. When we as believers hear the message that sets us free, we are to immediately leave the world of wickedness and false worship. We are to spiritually separate ourselves from the pollutions of this world. We are to touch no unclean thing. "Depart, Depart, go out from there!" This is God's strong charge to us. After we have been set free from sin and death by Christ, we must have nothing else to do with the evil and the idols of this world. We are to renounce all sin and idol worship, put them behind us, and be totally separated to God.

Acts 2:40 *With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."*

1 Cor 5:9-11 *I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.*

2 Cor 6:14-16 *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."*

2 Cor 6:17-18 *"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty.*

Eph 5:11-12 *Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.*

2 Th 3:6 *In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.*

Exo 23:2 *"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd."*

Exo 34:12 *Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you.*

Psa 1:1 *Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers.*

Prov 1:10 *My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them...My son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths.*

Prov 4:14 *Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.*

Prov 24:1 *Do not envy the wicked, do not desire their company.*

Prov 22:24-25 *Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.*

Prov 23:6-7 *Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies. For he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you. ■*