

God Can!
Isaiah 49:22-50:3

October 2, 2011

☞ Introduction

- ❖ a God of Surprises
 - ☆ in Israel's history^A

☆ in our lives

- ❖ Zion's surprised questions^B

☞ God Tells Zion How. 49:22-23

- ❖ God's plan and the Gentiles (v 22)

- ❖ God's plan in surprising (v 23)^C

☞ God Tells Zion He Can 49:24-26

- ❖ the doubting question asked (v 24)

- ❖ the question answered (v 25)^D

- ❖ God's power over the oppressor and all else (v 26)

☞ God Tells Zion How He Can 50:1-3

- ❖ Zion not divorced, her people not sold (v 1)^E

- ❖ The sin which sold and separated (v2a)^F

- ❖ but God power remains (vv 2b-3)

☞ Conclusion – God can still deliver!

^A Judges 6, 13
^B Isaiah 49:20-21
^C 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4, Esther 9:29-32

^D Mark 3:22-27
^E 1 Peter 4:17
^F Jeremiah 7:13, John 1:11

☞ Introduction

❖ God a God of Surprises

- ☆ Israel had sinned, and the Midianites had taken over the land, driving Israel into hiding in caves and stronghold. There, in Judges 6, was Gideon, the youngest son of one of the least important families of the tribes of Manasseh, hiding himself in a winepress, beating out grain for food, to keep it from being taken by Midian. The angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak tree on their property. And he spoke to Gideon and summoned him to be God’s valiant warrior. The outcome was that with 300 men the mighty forces of Midian were driven out of the land. God is a God of surprises.
- ☆ Judges 13 tells us about Manoah and His wife of the tribe of Dan; she was barren and they had no children. This was an especially sad thing because it meant that their allotment in the land of Promise would pass into someone else’s hands. But they were also sad because the Israel, again because of their sin, was oppressed by the Philistines and had been for forty years. The angel of the Lord came and promised her a son, a son who would be dedicated to the Lord from birth and who would deliver Israel. It took a long time for Manoah and his wife to accept that this would really happen – but it indeed did, and Samson was born and warred mightily against the Philistines. God is a God of surprises in the great matters.
- ☆ but our Creator God is also a God of surprises in the little things in our lives
 - ✧ think about those times that your breath has been taken away by a sunset; by glancing out on a dark, rainy day and seeing a rainbow; in walking through the woods or hills and coming upon a little waterfall; by looking out of my study down the driveway and seeing there on the median an ash tree: bronze, gold and yellow in the sunshine – our Creator God prepares such wonderful little surprises
 - ✧ as it did to one of our seniors when she found out that the new cook coming to her residence is a Christian
 - ✧ or as it did this week, when the weather forecast was for day after day of rain, and yet, day after day we looked out to see that luminescent autumn sun shining between those showers, the day clearing up, and giving opportunity to do some fall planting
 - ✧ what pleasant surprises our God prepares for those who love Him!

☆ next Sunday is Thanksgiving Sunday, and we will have the opportunity to share in thankfulness for God's lovely surprises to us.

❖ Look now at Isaiah 49:20-21

☆ we considered these verses a few weeks ago but they are important background to today's text

☆ they are prophetic of a time when God will give to Mother Zion one of His surprises

☆ **The children of whom you were bereaved will yet say in your ears, 'The place is too cramped for me; Make room for me that I may live here.'** Then you will say in your heart, 'Who has begotten these for me, Since I have been bereaved of my children And am barren, an exile and a wanderer? And who has reared these? Behold, I was left alone; From where did these come?'

☆ first Israel, then Judah and Jerusalem, had gone into captivity and exile on account of their continued sin, and Zion was to be left barren

☆ but now the city is teeming with children, and Zion is left with questions

☆ Who? Who gave birth to all these children – the new population of Jerusalem – seeing I was long deprived of them and am barren?

☆ Where? or from where, whence did they come from – they are so many more than were taken away? Well, now ...

👉 God Tells Zion How. 49:22-23

❖ God has a plan for the Gentiles, verse 22

☆ Both Jesus and Paul met with the anger of the Jewish mob when they taught that Gentiles would share in the blessing of the Messianic kingdom; and that fact is still denied today, although it is found throughout the OT, in some places clearly, and in some like this, less clearly, nevertheless present

☆ v 22 begins '**Thus says the Lord God**' and how appropriately

☆ it is the Lord, the Sovereign God who is in charge and who initiates what will take place

☆ it is God, that's in capital letters to translate Yahweh, Covenant name of Israel's God, keeping his covenant promises; who says

☆ v 22b: '**... Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations And set up My standard to the peoples; ...**' – the nations and the peoples here are the same; they are the non-Jewish people of the world – and they are doing God's bidding and – as is evident in the words that follow – they do so willingly

☆ God lifts up his beckoning hand of power and they come

- ✧ God lifts up his banner and they rally to the flag
- ☆ v 22c: ‘... And they will bring your sons in their bosom, And your daughters will be carried on their shoulders.’
 - ✧ it is these nations that bring Zion’s sons and daughters to her, those of which she asked ‘who?’ and ‘whence?’
 - ✧ and they do so tenderly, carrying the youngest in folds of their robes in the bosoms
 - ✧ they do so speedily: the Arabs used to put their children on their shoulders while very young, to hold on by themselves to their father’s head, so that he could work or walk or even ride a horse without being hindered; today most parents use baby carriers to do the same
- ❖ God’s plan is surprising, verse 23
 - ☆ this verse continues on the same theme, ‘Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses.’
 - ✧ the word ‘guardians,’ means ‘those who support,’ but could also be rendered as the masculine of nurse or ‘foster fathers’
 - ✧ either way, the royalty of the nations puts themselves into the service of bringing children to Zion
 - ✧ in history, in a fashion, this was the case with both King Cyrus, and with Esther, the Jewish queen of the King Ahasuerus
 - ☆ v 23b: ‘... They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth And lick the dust of your feet...’
 - ✧ many of royalty, who themselves receive homage and obedience, have worshipped the true Israel, Jesus Christ, and paid homage and obedience to Zion the royal bride of Christ. ‘His Royal Highness, the Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria, when a doctor who sought to soothe him in facing death by pointing out the distinguished position God had placed him in, answered, “No; remember, If I am to be saved, it is not as a prince, but as a sinner.”—{2}.’
 - ✧ God delivered the exiles surprisingly from Babylon at the King’s command; God delivers man surprisingly from sin by the cross of Jesus Christ.
 - ☆ v 23c: ‘... And you will know that I am the Lord; Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.’
 - ✧ the surprise continues: this is done not to show the pagans God’s power, but that God’s own people should know and trust in Him
 - ✧ these are words for us today: we look at the world around us; the wars; the violence; the cheating;

the immorality; and we throw up our hands in despair – but our God is sovereign and our God keeps His covenant and will fulfill the last word in every one of His promises: so, ...

☞ God Tells Zion He Can. 49:24-26

❖ the question is asked in verse 24: 'Can the prey be taken from the mighty man, Or the captives of a tyrant be rescued?'

☆ Assyria was the mighty nation of Isaiah's day, seemingly invincible; but Isaiah foresaw them being overthrown by Babylon, capital of the Chaldean and so presumably even stronger; what hope then was there for the poor Jews exiled in Babylon? for salvation of the captivity?

☆ the question expects the answer 'no one can,' but the true answer differs:

❖ verse 25 first, with the same words as in the question, says, 'Surely, thus says the Lord, "Even the captives of the mighty man will be taken away, And the prey of the tyrant will be rescued; ..."' – the question of verse 24 is true enough from a human perspective, but it leaves God out of the equation

☆ it continues, "... For I will contend with the one who contends with you, And I will save your sons."

☆ Israel's covenant God will honour that covenant; God can save out of the hand of the mighty man; and God will save

☆ in Mark 3:22ff, the religious rulers accused Jesus of casting out demons by the ruler of the demons, that is Satan. After showing them how illogical it would be for Satan to fight against Satan, Jesus says 'But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.' (Mark 3:27). Jesus entered Satan's house and defeated him and his powers on the cross. God can!

❖ verse 26 begins with a strong, figurative expression illustrating that not only would God defeat Zion's enemies from outside, bringing upon them the dire circumstances of famine and drought, but that they would also be defeated from inside, 'I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, And they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine; ...'

☆ in the years following King Nebuchadnezzar's death, his son, Amel-Marduk (Evil-Merodach) was murdered by Nergal-Sharezer to take over the throne; Nergal-Sharezer's son was murdered in turn by two of his generals; so Zion's oppressors, in figure, fed upon their own flesh, and drank their blood as wine

☆ the verse continues, 'and all flesh will know that I, the Lord, am your Saviour And your Redeemer, the

Mighty One of Jacob.'

- ☆ Zion's covenant God and our God, Yahweh is Saviour; Yahweh is Redeemer; Yahweh is Mighty – be it known to all, our God can!

👉 God Tells Zion How He Can 50:1-3

❖ Zion thinks that it has been deserted by God

- ☆ but there has been no divorce between Yahweh and Israel His nation; God did not sell the individuals of the nation to any creditors.

☆ verse 1a: 'Thus says the Lord, "Where is the certificate of divorce By which I have sent your mother away? Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you?"'

☆ the answer is 'Nowhere, because it doesn't exist.' The answer is 'No one, for God is no man's debtor.'

☆ verse 1b: '"Behold, you were sold for your iniquities, And for your transgressions your mother was sent away."'

☆ it was their sins that sold them as individuals into exile; it was on account of their transgressions, that the nation was separated from God

☆ it may appear at times that God has deserted the Church or that Christians have been abandoned into captivity

☆ but Jesus will never privily put away His betrothed bride, the Church, nor leave nor forsake His people; if these things come upon us as a church or as individuals, it may be on account of sin, 'For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; ...' (1 Peter 4:17)

☆ It is because God has not changed from the God who gave His promises, that He Can!

❖ that's the picture in verse 2: God came to His people and they did not receive Him: 'Why was there no man when I came? When I called, why was there none to answer? ...' Many times God repeats this theme; e.g. Jeremiah 7:13, '... the Lord (declares), "and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer,"' and of God when He came to this earth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, John 1:11 writes, 'He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.' – but does that mean that God cannot? ... no way, for the verse goes on,

☆ 'Is My hand so short that it cannot ransom? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, I dry up the sea with My rebuke, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink for lack of water And die of thirst.' and verse 3, 'I clothe the heavens with blackness And make sackcloth their covering.'

- ☆ God's arm is long enough that it can reach out and do whatsoever He desires; and that includes His care for His people.
- ☆ there is an echo here back to God's deliverance of His people from Egypt: drying up the Red sea so His people could cross on dry land; drying up the Jordan river in its time of flood so they could enter the land of promise; sending blackness upon the land of Egypt, literally and figuratively
- ☆ and likewise God delivered men from the bondage of sin, when darkness covered the land as Christ the mighty Maker died on the cross for that sin
- ☆ God Can!

👉 Conclusion

- ❖ Albert Benjamin Simpson was born in P. E. I. and was the founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, a man of great faith in God's power. He said
 - ☆ 'Whatever God has ever done, He can do again!
 - ☆ Whatever God has ever done anywhere, He can do here.
 - ☆ Anything God has done for anyone, He can do for you.' –{3}.
- ❖ What kind of deliverance do you need?
 - ☆ from the guilt of sin? He is able to deliver you; only trust in Him.
 - ☆ from the power of sin; from some besetting habit? He is able to deliver you; only trust His promises.
 - ☆ from oppression and the oppressor? He is able to deliver you; cast your care on Him for He cares for you. God can!

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan

Volume 6, Isaiah, by Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland;

EJY – The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans

K&D – Commentary on the Old Testament, by Keil & Delitzsch; Volume 7, Isaiah, by Franz Delitzsch

Kerux – The sermon and illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick to be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. The Biblical Museum, under Isaiah 49:24-26

3. Kerux illustration #4536