

THREE PROMISES TO SUSTAIN YOU IN HARD TIMES

11 A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse; a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ²The Spirit of Jehovah will rest upon him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. ³He will delight in the fear of Jehovah. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, nor will he decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴rather, he will judge the needy with righteousness and render decisions with justice for the meek of the land. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵Righteousness will be the belt around his waist and integrity will be the sash around his loins. ⁶The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the young lion and the yearling will play together, and a little child will lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear will graze together, their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will reach his hand into the viper's nest. ⁹They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain; for, just as the waters cover the sea, so shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah.

¹⁰On that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a signal for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. ¹¹On that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. ¹²He will give a signal for the nations and assemble the exiles of Israel; he will gather the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the earth. ¹³Ephraim's envy will disappear, and those who trouble Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will no longer envy Judah, and Judah will no longer trouble Ephraim. ¹⁴They will swoop down on the slopes of Philistia to the west; together they will plunder the people of the East. They will lay hands on Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will be subject to them. ¹⁵Jehovah will utterly dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; and with his scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the [Euphrates] River. He will break it up into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals. ¹⁶There will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of his people who are left, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt

12 On that day you will say, I will give thanks to you, Jehovah, for although you were angry with me, your anger has been pacified and you have comforted me. ²Look! God is [the source of] my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid; for Jehovah, Jehovah himself, is my strength and my song—indeed, he has become my Savior. ³Therefore, with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

⁴On that day you will say, Give thanks to Jehovah, call upon his name! Declare his deeds among the peoples! Proclaim that his name is exalted! ⁵Sing to Jehovah, for he has done awesome things; let this be made known throughout all the world! ⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, you who dwell in Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel who is present with you. (Isa. 11:1-12:6)

Introduction

How would you respond if you were asked the following question?

As you observe sadness and evil in this world and as you face personal problems and pressures, what keeps you going from day to day?

Here is the response of one young man:

I keep going by focusing on my loving, caring Father-Creator, who has revealed Himself as the antithesis of evil and who wants to wipe all tears from my eyes.

Here is the response of a forty-year-old man:

I can go on because God is fair and compassionate, the Bible is true, the Holy Spirit guides and empowers, and Jesus is alive!

Here is the response of a grandmother:

I know that the LORD is faithful. Scripture proves it. I trust Him to be faithful in helping me through problems and pressures.

Here is the response of a man nearing retirement:

I keep going because I know God is in control and I belong to His Son, my Savior. Heaven is not far away. Soon I'll be there to live with God and without sin. (POWER, 11/12/89, p.8)

How would **you** respond to that question?

Through the prophet Isaiah, the LORD had warned His people that He would visit them with very severe measures: *"I will send him [i.e.; the king of Assyria and his army] against a godless nation. I will commission him against a people who incite my wrath, to seize the spoil and snatch the prey, and to trample them down like mud in the streets"* (Isa. 10:6.)

Although the LORD found it necessary to employ very severe measures against His Old Testament people, He also supplied the faithful with promises of hope to sustain them in the midst of hard times. When we encounter hard times, let us look to those promises of hope to sustain us.

I. Look to the Promise that the LORD will Establish His Kingdom (Isa. 11:1-9)

History teaches us that the fierce armies of Assyria did, indeed, invade the land of Israel—just as the LORD had foretold through the prophet Isaiah. The Assyrians completely overwhelmed the ten northern tribes (the nation of Israel,)

conquering them and deporting them throughout the ancient Near East. Having thoroughly dispatched the northern tribes, the Assyrian armies advanced against the two southern tribes that composed the nation of Judah—one town after another fell before them until they stood at the very gates of Jerusalem:

[The Assyrian] approaches Aiath, he has passed through Migron; he stores his supplies at Micmash. ²⁹They have gone through the mountain pass, and they say, "We will camp over night at Geba." Ramah trembles. Gibeah of Saul has fled. ³⁰Cry out, O daughter of Gallim! Be on guard, O Laishah! O poor Anathoth! ³¹Madmenah is in flight! The people of Gebim flee for safety! ³²This very day he will reach Nob: he will shake his fist at the mountains of the daughter of Zion, at the hill of Jerusalem. (Isa. 10:28-32)

It appeared that this fierce and defiant empire of Assyria would totally annihilate the people of God and supplant them with their own pagan empire—indeed, what little was left of the nation of Judah is viewed as a mere stump of a tree that had been chopped down to the ground.

But now the LORD declares that from that stump there shall spring new life: *"A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse; a branch from his roots will bear fruit"* (11:1.) Great King David's royal line would not be extinguished; rather it would produce a king who will one day rule over all the earth—that promised king being none other than the Messiah. Note that Isaiah 10:33-34 described the destruction of the Assyrian armies as they besieged Jerusalem, describing that destruction in terms of the LORD chopping down the forest of Lebanon—not a tree is left standing: *"Look! The Lord, Jehovah of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrifying stroke; the tall trees shall be cut down, and the lofty shall be brought low. ³⁴He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One."* Now, in contrast to the "forest" of the Assyrian army that is cut down by the hand of the LORD, Isaiah declares that from the chopped down stump of Jesse the LORD will cause there to spring new life.

Isaiah 11:3-5 describes the future reign of this king who is none other than Jesus the Messiah. *"He will delight in the fear of Jehovah"* (vs. 3a.) The Hebrew word, רִיחַ, has the root meaning, "to smell," "to smell with pleasure," and hence, "to delight in." Thus the Messiah is pictured as "breathing in the invigorating atmosphere" of the fear of the LORD; and being Himself governed by that holy fear, He shall carry out the rule assigned to Him by His heavenly Father:

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, nor will he decide by what he hears with his ears; ⁴rather, he will judge the needy with righteousness and render decisions with justice for the meek of the land. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. ⁵Righteousness will be the belt around his waist and integrity will be the sash around his loins. (Isa. 11:3b-5)

He will not base His judgments (decisions) upon superficial, outward appearances; rather, He will look upon the heart and judge with true righteousness. Consequently, the poor and the meek shall receive justice and the wicked shall be condemned. What is described here is the righteous reign of the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns at the end of the age to bring in the kingdom of God in all of its fullness, note 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10a,

God is just. He will pay back affliction to those who afflict you ⁷and give relief to you who are afflicted, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. ⁸He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power ¹⁰on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. (2 Thess. 1:6-10a)

Verses 6-9a describe the universal peace that shall permeate the LORD's great kingdom when He comes to establish a new heavens and a new earth:

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the young lion and the yearling will play together, and a little child will lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear will graze together, their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will reach his hand into the viper's nest. (Isa. 11: 6-8)

Peaceful co-existence throughout nature and between man and nature; it will be Paradise. As verse 9 goes on to say, *"They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain; for, just as the waters cover the sea, so shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah."* The entire world shall be transformed into the kingdom of God—the kingdom of God, the earthly manifestation of which in Old Testament times was concentrated on holy Mount Zion, shall expand over the entire earth. When the LORD reveals Himself in His glory, the whole world shall bow before Him and acknowledge Him as God: *"Every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess [that I am God]. ²⁴They will say of me, Righteousness and strength are found in Jehovah alone"* (Isa. 45:23-24a.)

In hard times, let us look with confidence to the LORD's sure promise that He indeed **will** establish His kingdom. When the seventh angel shall finally sound his trumpet, heralding the consummation of this present age, *"then the kingdom of the world will ... become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever"* (Rev. 11:15.)

II. Look to the Promise that the LORD will Re-gather His People (Isa. 11:10-16)

Those who survived the onslaught of the Assyrian army were taken captive and deported from the land of Israel, note 2 Kings 17:5-6,

The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. ⁶In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in the towns of the Medes. (2 Kgs.17:5-6)

They were removed from all the blessings of God that were once available to them in the Promised Land; above all, the temple of God, which was His earthly dwelling place.

But now in 11:11 we read that the LORD will reach out His hand to once again reclaim and re-gather His people. Just as the LORD had called His people out of Egypt, so the day is coming when He shall once again gather them unto Himself. On this second occasion He shall reclaim them from throughout all the earth:

On that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. ¹²He will give a signal for the nations and assemble the exiles of Israel; he will gather the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isa. 11:11-12)

Romans 11:25-26 speaks of a great and final ingathering of Israel to the LORD,

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. (Rom. 11:25-26)

With reconciliation to the LORD by means of Jesus the Messiah, there also comes reconciliation to one another as brothers in the Messiah: *“Ephraim’s envy will disappear, and those who trouble Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will no longer envy Judah, and Judah will no longer trouble Ephraim”* (vs. 13.) Note: The reconciliation created by the Messiah is here couched in Old Testament terms; for a New Testament expression of this glorious work of the Messiah one may consider Galatians 3:28-29,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to

Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, and with regard to the promise you are heirs. (Gal. 3:28-29)

Verse 14 goes on to declare that the redeemed of the LORD will share with the Messiah in His conquest and dominion over their enemies: *"They will swoop down on the slopes of Philistia to the west; together they will plunder the people of the East. They will lay hands on Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will be subject to them."* Once again, the Messiah's final victory over His enemies, a victory in which His people participate, is here couched in language that would be understandable to God's Old Testament people in the days of Isaiah; for a New Testament expression of this same truth one may consider Revelation 19:11,14-15,

Then I saw heaven opened, and there before me was a white horse, and he who sat upon it was called Faithful and True. With righteousness he judges and wages war ... ¹⁴The armies of heaven followed him upon white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵Out of his mouth came a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. (Rev. 19:11,14-15)

Verses 15-16 repeat for emphasis and assurance this promise of a future restoration. The LORD will re-gather His people out of Assyria—and from all the earth (vs. 12,) in much the same way as He had previously called them out of Egypt. This passage, using imagery meaningful to Old Testament Israel, is prophetically portraying the physical and spiritual restoration of the people of Israel unto the LORD at the end of this present age, note, again, Romans 11:25-26,

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. (Rom. 11:25-26)

In hard times let us look with confidence to the LORD's promise that He will reclaim and re-gather His people to Himself. As this applies to the Christian, it is the promise that the LORD is faithful to His people in Christ and will be no means forsake us, note 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, *"[God] will also confirm you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."*

III. Look to the Promise that the LORD will Give Us Reason to Praise Him (Isa. 12:1-6)

This generation of Israel no doubt thought that joy had left them forever; just as on a future occasion did the captives in Babylon, who hung up their harps: *"By*

the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. ²There on the poplars we hung our harps” (Psl. 137:1-2.)

But Isaiah 12:1-2 speaks of the day when the redeemed will give thanks to the LORD: *“On that day you will say, I will give thanks to you, Jehovah; for although you were angry with me, your anger has been pacified and you have comforted me. ²Look! God is the source of my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid; for Jehovah, Jehovah himself, is my strength and my song—indeed, he has become my Savior. (Isa. 12:1-2)*

God looks down upon sinful mankind with a holy anger, but in His mercy He has provided the atoning sacrifice in the person of His one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ: *“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:10.)* Those who trust in Jesus the Messiah have cause to sing the song of thanksgiving presented in Isaiah 12:1-2.

Verse 3 speaks about the comfort and privilege given to the believer in Christ: *“Therefore, with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”* The imagery is that of an abundant supply of refreshing, life-giving water—very meaningful to people living in the arid Middle East. Thus are we reminded of the abundance of grace and divine blessing that is offered to us in Christ; as the Apostle Paul expresses it: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3.)* The Apostle John testifies, *“from his fullness we have all received; indeed, grace upon grace” (Jn. 1:16.)* Here is a divine abundance that is presently ministered to us in measured portion, but that shall finally be poured out upon us in unlimited and eternal bounty in the kingdom of God.

In response to the experience of the LORD’s grace and blessing, the redeemed will exhort one another to give thanks to the LORD: *“On that day you will say, Give thanks to Jehovah; call upon his name! Declare his deeds among the peoples! Proclaim that his name is exalted!” (vs. 4.)* They will sing to the LORD: *“Sing to Jehovah, for he has done awesome things; let this be made known throughout all the world!” (vs. 5.)* Verse six goes on to reveal that the redeemed will shout out our praise of the LORD for His presence among us: *“Shout aloud and sing for joy, you who dwell in Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel who is present with you.”*

In hard times let us look with confidence to the LORD’s sure promise that He will give us abundant reason to praise Him.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why are you so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. (Psl. 43:5.)

Conclusion

As you observe sadness and evil in this world and as you face personal problems and pressures, what keeps you going from day to day?

In this portion of Scripture, the LORD provides us with three sure promises to sustain us in hard times: 1) the promise that the LORD will indeed establish His kingdom; 2) the promise that the LORD will re-gather and re-claim His people—as it applies to the Christian, it is the promise that the LORD is faithful to uphold us and preserve us and that He will by no means abandon us; and 3) the promise that the LORD will give us abundant reason to praise His great and glorious Name.