

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 99

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Christ in the House of Martha and Mary by Pieter Aertsen Cir 1553

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Ninety-Nine

ISRAEL IS GOD'S WITNESS TO THE WORLD

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Isaiah 43:10–13

¹⁰Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. ¹¹I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no saviour. ¹²I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed; and there was no strange god among you: therefore, ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I am God. ¹³Yea, since the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who can hinder it (ASV, 1901)?

This section concludes that which was written here in Hebrew poetic form starting with chapter 42:1 and continuing unbroken here to 43:13. The witness, Israel is whom God pleads and calls, His servant, is formed such for the world-wide task that all other nations were entirely ignorant. That task is that the Lord Jehovah was He, *the only wise God*, the only infallible and one hundred percent accurate foreteller of the future. The people of Israel could testify that the Lord had foretold to Abraham their affliction in Egypt, their coming out in the Exodus and settling in the land of Canaan, many hundreds of years before they came to pass. All these prophecies were exactly fulfilled. Instead of saying, all other gods are manufactured by men, but I am uncreated, and exist from all eternity, he condenses all that into a simple statement, “*there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me, i.e., all other gods were made, but none of them was made before or by Me.*

The Lord also implies a challenge to the idolatrous nations of the earth to gather and put the powers of the deities they confide in to the test as Elijah did to the prophets of Baal. Israel has been through many sorrows. Were any foreseen and announced by these prophets of false deities? Did they faithfully deal with her sin and warn of its certain Divine retribution? Obviously not and all their prophesying of a better life here while giving the assurance of ever-increasing prosperity, never came to pass. Because they were all lies. The Lord God alone announced the sorrows that lay in Israel's future, and the sufferings which came upon them. Only accurate realized prophecies can affirm that truth. The same happens today with the false prophets elevating false expectations in light of massive national sin.

While the prophet Ezekiel was a prisoner of war in Babylon (Cir. 593 B.C.), the false prophets back in Jerusalem had been telling the people that this sojourn in Babylon was only temporary. They also led the people to think God would never allow the temple to be destroyed. The Jews who remained in Israel enjoyed a long history of Divine intervention, and they thought that no matter what they did, their eternal salvation and temporal security was assured. The truth is, the false prophets were lying to the people. In Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah was prophesying of Jerusalem's destruction if the people did not stop sinning. However, the false prophets' message sounded better to them than Jeremiah's truth. For example, consider the conflicting messages of

Hananiah the prophet who spoke lies, with Jeremiah who spoke the truth regarding the last and final invasion of Nebuchadnezzar. In Babylon, Ezekiel was also warning about this same event! This dialogue, recorded by Jeremiah, occurred in Jerusalem during the August-September time frame of 593 B.C:

Jeremiah 28:1–17

¹And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet, who was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of Jehovah, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, ²Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of Jehovah's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried to Babylon: ⁴and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went to Babylon, saith Jehovah; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. ⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of Jehovah, ⁶even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: Jehovah do so; Jehovah perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of Jehovah's house, and all them of the captivity, from Babylon unto this place. ⁷Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people: ⁸The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. ⁹The prophet that prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that Jehovah hath truly sent him. ¹⁰Then Hananiah the prophet took the bar from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. ¹¹And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon within two full years from off the neck of all the nations. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. ¹²Then the word of Jehovah came unto Jeremiah, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the bar from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ¹³Go, and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah: Thou hast broken the bars of wood; but thou hast made in their stead bars of iron. ¹⁴For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may served Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. ¹⁵Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah: Jehovah hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. ¹⁶Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will send thee away from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast spoken rebellion against Jehovah. ¹⁷So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month. (ASV, 1901)

FOLLOWING FALSE PROPHETS

Idolatry is image-worship or divine honor paid to any created object. Paul describes the origin of idolatry in Romans 1:28, “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.*” This is not appreciation or admiration of something. It is assigning a deity-like admiration to anything other than God. The three basic categories of idolatry are worshipping things of the earth, things of the sky or people.

In Scripture, idolatry is driven by satanic demons affecting the minds of heathen people. It is promoted by false prophets. It came into the nation Israel through their association with the Canaanites and Egyptians before them while they were there. This was Israel’s great national sin, and God dealt with through the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles. These exiles temporarily purified the Jews of all idolatrous tendencies. The first and second commandments are directed against idolatry of every form. The Mosaic Law mandated the execution of any offender (Exodus 22: 20). His nearest relatives were not only bound to denounce him, but to also deliver him up for punishment (Deuteronomy 13:20–10), and they were to cast the first stone (Deuteronomy 17:2–7). This shows the degree of seriousness our Lord sees this. At the end of the Great Tribulation, when Jesus returns, there will be a national regeneration of Israel. At that time there will be the elimination of all the false prophets who led the nation in idolatry and enticed others into false worship. The false prophet’s families will be the first to carry out the punishment of their idolatrous family member(s). This was a capital crime in Israel (Deuteronomy 13:6–10):

Zechariah 13:2–4

²And it shall come to pass in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered; and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land ³And it shall come to pass that, when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of Jehovah; and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. ⁴And it shall come to pass in that day that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he prophesieth; neither shall they wear a hairy mantle to deceive: (ASV, 1901)

In the New Testament the term “idolatry” is used to designate covetousness (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13; Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5). Coveting is wanting something so badly that it assumes a deity-like obsession to the lusting person. They will do anything to obtain it. Such is the mission of the false prophet to entice others into false expectations.

GOD CONFIRMS THEIR EVIL

Ezekiel 11:2–4

²And he said unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise iniquity, and that give wicked counsel in this city; ³that say, The time is not near to build houses: this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh. ⁴Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son

of man. (ASV, 1901).

These men will be called out for their evil plotting and the giving of wicked advice to the people in Jerusalem. These leaders were responsible for upholding general obedience to the spiritual leaders, as well as guiding the moral and social direction of the population. The prevalent attitude of the people was derived from these men. In verse 3, the false prophets, such as “*Jaazaniah*” and “*Pelatiah*,” also likened Jerusalem to a “*caldron*” (boiling pot) with the people being the “*flesh*”, or meat, placed there for cooking. In this illustration they were attempting to convey a cozy sense of “security” to the people, one of them being in a warm, comforting, and protected environment. Just as meat is not taken out of the pot until it is fully cooked, they were telling people they would not be forced to leave Jerusalem before the appropriate time, and then it would be at the end of their natural lives. Even though these men knew that God had forsaken Jerusalem (Ezekiel 9:9) (and affirmed it by putting their backsides toward the temple and defecating toward it) they still thought they would prevail against Babylon. God exposed these wicked men to Ezekiel by saying, “*Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man.*” The Lord repeats the command to prophecy for emphasis and urgency because He is long suffering, and always provides a way out of the impending judgment for them *if they change*. People have to change to meet God’s will, not the other way around.

It is important to realize what the prophet Jeremiah had said earlier when he spoke out against the false leadership of these men and those who followed them. They branded Jeremiah as a “traitor” for his prophecies, saying it was God who had sent them over to Babylon, and they should accept Babylonian suzerainty. If they would not, God would send the Babylonian army in to destroy Jerusalem. Jeremiah’s truth greatly angered the people to the point that his life was in danger. False prophets gave the people “hope” that those who were exiled in 605 B.C. and 597 B.C. would be returning soon. King Jehoiachin (who was taken in 597 B.C.) was in prison. According to the false prophet and leaders, King Jehoiachin would soon be released and reinstated as King of Judah. Jeremiah wrote a letter and sent it to the elders in Babylon that told them after “*seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place*” (Jeremiah 29:10, ASV 1901). In the letter he stated that they should build houses for them to live in while in Babylon because they were going to be there quite a while. But wicked leaders continued to defy truth by saying that the people in Babylon should not build houses there, and their release was to be expected soon. They told the people exactly the opposite of what God was telling them through the true prophets, such as Jeremiah.

Knowing the difference between a true message from God, and a false message from non-believers, or those hostile to God, is important. The church is commanded to clearly reject the apostate messages, and to disassociate and stay away from those people who promulgate them.

GOD’S DIRECTIONS TO THE CHURCH REGARDING FALSE PROPHETS

After carefully evaluating the false doctrine, we are to follow Matthew 18:15–17 and separate from them. Separation is not an optional part of Christianity; it is a commandment (Romans 16:17–18; 2 Corinthians 6:14–17; 1 Timothy 6:5; 2 Timothy 2:16–18; 3:5; Titus 3:10; 2 John 7–11; Revelation 18:4). Separation is not mean or unloving; it is obedience to God. Some commands clearly stated in God’s word about separation include these statements:

- Mark them . . . avoid them (Romans 16:17)
- Be ye not unequally yoked together with (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- Have no fellowship with (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- Come out from among (2 Corinthians 6:17)
- Withdraw thyself (1 Timothy 6:5)
- Shun (2 Timothy 2:16)
- Purge oneself from (2 Timothy 2:21)
- From such turn away (2 Timothy 3:5)
- Reject (Titus 3:10)
- Receive them not into your house neither bid them Godspeed (2 John 10)
- Withdraw yourself (2 Thessalonians 3:6)

Separation is a wall of protection against spiritual danger. Failure to separate from errors in spiritual areas leaves one open to the influence of that error (1 Corinthians 15:33). The reason a shepherd separates the sheep from wolves is to protect them. Likewise, a faithful and godly Bible teacher will seek to separate his flock from spiritual dangers that are even more destructive than wolves. The Lord will do all He can to keep heresies out of the church. They are a disease in the church of Jesus Christ that requires treatment, as if there is a disease within our bodies that require a medical doctor to treat us. Legitimate teachers of the Bible will do all they can to prevent, or stop heresies, just as legitimate doctors strive to adequately treat diseases in our bodies. Unfortunately, there are more “quacks” in the spiritual realm than in the physical realm. This is because the prize for pure spiritual truth is eternal life, and it is the greatest prize on earth to receive. Nothing has greater value, and many false prophets, corrupt denominations, and equally corrupt seminary teachings seek to stop it by affecting as many people as possible. If they are successful, then Satan has accomplished one of his goals, which is the eternal destruction of human souls. As a result, few will find eternal salvation (Matthew 7:13–14). So, has it ever been; so is it today.

And so, shall the liars continue to prophesy a pleasant future as long as the devil is unchained and is still able to deceive the nations of the earth. When the four hundred false prophets told Ahab the king of Israel that God would deliver Ramoth-Gilead (Syria) into the king’s hand (II Chronicles 18: 5). but smooth as were the words were, the end of that way was exceedingly rough for Ahab. He would not listen to the true prophet and died in battle as a result. In this story Ahab the wicked king of the Northern tribes was visited by Jehoshaphat the king of the Southern tribes of Judah regarding the impending war with Syria.

II Chronicles 18:1–7

Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and he joined affinity with Ahab. ²And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that were with him, and moved him to go up with him to Ramoth-gilead. ³And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war.

⁴And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire first, I pray thee, for the word of Jehovah. ⁵Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver it into the hand of the king. ⁶But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah besides, that we may inquire of him? ⁷And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of Jehovah: but I hate him; for he never prophesieth good concerning me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so (ASV, 1901).

So, Ahab did not want truth as so many today do not either. Truth at the close of a dispensation is not always with the majority of teachers of God's Word. So even to this day false prophets have the same characteristic of preaching peace and prosperity to a false Church. The New Testament shows us that these are the real adversaries of our God and His Christ. When the nation Israel no longer rejects her Messiah, she will recognize that the Messiah is God in that human body of Jesus.

God concludes this section of poetry by affirming that *Beside me there is no saviour*. None but God can save men. Man cannot make atonement for others. He continues I have declared, meaning I announced, and delivered, and proclaimed (the deliverance), when there was no strange god among you, I did what the idol-gods cannot do, which is accurately announce deliverance, and make it happen. I further proclaimed it, at the time when you Israelites had no idolatry among you.

The allusion is to the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian Sennacherib, which God announced by the mouth of Isaiah (Isaiah 37:33–35), carried out by the His angel (Isaiah 37:36), and then caused again to be announced by Isaiah, who wrote the two accounts of the deliverance—both that in his own prophecy, and that in the Second Book of Kings (II Kings 19:20–35). At that time there was no (open) idolatry in Judah, since Hezekiah had destroyed the idols (II Kings 18:4). Therefore, ye are my witnesses . . . that I am God; literally, and ye are my witnesses, and I am God. Ye can bear witness of the truth of what I have asserted in the previous portion of the verse, and your witness to this event proves me to be God.

This is an important passage. It says that the ultimate victory is always of God over all opposition. It declares that God's essential purpose is that all men should know Him and believe in Him. And it also reveals that Israel will definitely continue to be used by God, since God has chosen her for this purpose and will not change his mind. The passage also says, that, extraordinary freedom was given to them by God. Israel is free to witness against God as well as for Him. On the other hand, if Israel is rebellious and witnesses against her Lord, then it is her very rebelliousness which becomes the medium through which God reveals his grace. Over every object and in every age the power of Jehovah had been clearly proved to be supreme and absolute. The concluding thought to this section of Scripture then is not that God will from this present time show Himself to be what He is, but that as long as time has existed, He is God and has so always manifested Himself. The world is without excuse when He is denied.

Next message: GOD INTENDED ISRAEL TO BE A WITNESS FOR HIM TO THE WORLD
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