

Come Follow Me  
Elo Viz production  
Week 39  
Isaiah 40-49

I'd like to begin by relating a story that happened in history that you might not be familiar with. There was a Greek historian by the name of Herodotus who gave an account of Cyrus the Great who was the same King that sent the Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. But, before this happened there was another event that was foretold by Isaiah.

The City of Babylon had walls that were 310 feet high, 87 feet thick. Watch towers every 45 feet, in a circle around the city that was 60 square miles. And the Euphrates river ran right through the middle of the city. On each end of the city walls where the river entered there were 2 huge bronze gates. In 539 BC Cyrus the Great who was at the time the King of the Persian Empire and the uniter of the Medes and the Persians, brought his armies against Babylon. Cyrus instructed his men to have the Euphrates river diverted upstream from Babylon into a different canal and by doing so it would lower the river's level as it ran into the City. It was lowered so much that it was only as high as a man's thigh, so that they could wade through it. Once this happened one evening under the leadership of general Ugabaru, he amassed his men and they went into the Euphrates river under the Bronze gates and over took the city of Babylon in one night.

link-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQRDSHtrbjo>

Why this was so important is because in Isaiah 45 this event was foretold. Listen to what Isaiah wrote in somewhere around 740 BC nearly 200 years before this event- (Isaiah 45:1-3)

“1 Thus saith the Lord to his <sup>a</sup>anointed, to <sup>b</sup>Cyrus, whose right hand I have <sup>c</sup>holden, to <sup>d</sup>subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the <sup>e</sup>two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

2 I will go before thee, and make the <sup>a</sup>crooked places straight: I will <sup>b</sup>break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

3 And I will give thee the <sup>a</sup>treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call *thee* by thy <sup>b</sup>name, am the <sup>c</sup>God of Israel.”

This was a direct revelation to Isaiah about events that will happen in the future before this guy was even born. He also does it in one verse prior to this. Chapter 44 verse 28

“28 That saith of <sup>a</sup>Cyrus, *He is* my <sup>b</sup>shepherd, and shall perform all my <sup>c</sup>pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be <sup>d</sup>built; and to the <sup>e</sup>temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.”

At the time of this prophecy there was already a temple in Judah. A functioning beautiful temple. The people must have thought that he was going crazy. What do you mean that there is going to be a temple built in Jerusalem? It's already built. What they didn't know is that 587 BC king

Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon would conquer the kingdom of Judah, take all their gold and treasures and completely destroy the temple. And at the time Babylon wasn't any sort of super power in that region, Assyria was the one everyone was afraid of. But God knew. God knew that the temple would be destroyed and that Cyrus the Great would be Born and be a symbol of Him. Cyrus was referred to as "the shepherd" and "the anointed". God also knew that even though Cyrus was an Idol worshiper that He could use him to free his people once they had repented. Cyrus at the time would be their temporal savior, a symbol of Christ who would come and be their Eternal Savior.

Now, why is all this important? Well, there are two reasons. First is that next week we are going to be studying the most important event in history that is foretold in more detail than any of the four gospels in the New testament. And second, is that there is a gospel truth that God knows everything, He is an "Omnipotent" God, meaning that He can do anything, He is all powerful. And He is also an "Omniscient" God, meaning he knows everything. He knows you and every choice you are going to make before you make it. He knows every feeling you will have before you feel it. We can find great comfort in this knowing that God knows everything about us. For example, let's say that you as a parent have a child that has a sneaky personality. As a parent you know before they do what choice they will make when they are faced with a decision. When they actually do make that decision you are not surprised because you knew they didn't have the self control to make any other decision. You may feel sad about that decision because you had hoped that they would have learned from their last mistake, but it was in their nature. So, you help them, teach them and hope that next time they will make a better choice. This is the same with our Heavenly Father. He knows you better than you do. He knows the choices you will make before you make them; because He knows you. And when we make a mistake it is not God that is disappointed in us. Like a loving Father, He is there to pick us up and encourages us to try again. When we feel those feelings of distance from God or worthlessness, these are feelings placed there by the adversary in an attempt to get us to turn away from God and drag ourselves into the gulf of self pity and punishment. When we have thoughts that we are not good enough, that we deserve punishment, that we have no worth. Those all come from the adversary. This is not the way of the Gospel or the God whom we worship. Our God, our Father: Is kind, understanding, forgiving, patient, and unconditionally loving. And you can only begin to understand that when you strive to be like that.

Isaiah give us an incredible insight in chapter 40 verse 31 when he says:

"<sup>a</sup>31 But they that <sup>a</sup>wait upon the Lord shall <sup>b</sup>renew their <sup>c</sup>strength; they shall mount up with wings as <sup>d</sup>eagles; they shall <sup>e</sup>run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint."

I love the promises contained in this verse. I feel that the older I get the more I need these gifts from God. But the initial condition of these blessings is sometimes overlooked. In order for the Lord to renew our strength, to soar like eagles, to run and walk without weariness or fainting we must "wait" on the Lord. When I first read this I thought this meant to be patient. I need to wait until it is God's time for my prayers to be answered. But I was struck with amazement when the true meaning was opened to me as my wife and I sat in a restaurant with some friends of ours. This young lady who was our waitress did an amazing job of "waiting" on us. She told us about the menu, took our order, brought us our food and checked in on us several times to make sure everything was perfect. As I pondered this, the meaning of this verse in Isaiah changed. When

we are asked to “wait” on the Lord it has less to do with our patience and more to do with our willingness to work. More specifically to work for Him. This realization helps us to put our own wants and needs aside and turn to the Lord and His needs and wants. As we pray, we might ask God what it is that He would like us to do today. What are his desires for our life accomplishments?

My son who is a sophomore in high school this year has lots of ambition to do every activity he possibly can. He wants to do a musical for a theater that he has previously performed at, and wants to play football, have a great social life and work a full time job to earn money for his mission. As someone who has felt the constraints of time I have attempted to explain to him how doing all of these things are nearly impossible to fit into one day. In a recent conversation I had with him, I tried to explain that there might be something that are more important than all of those things. God may have another plan for you and your life that doesn't include all of those things. I then encouraged him to seek some answers, to “wait” on the Lord and find out what God's desires are for your life. This is the same advice I try to give myself when I feel the pulls of life when a worldly desire creeps in. Is this what God wants? I ask myself, or is this my own desire? What I have discovered in my mostly failed attempts to “wait” on the Lord is that when I do receive an answer and I pursue that which God has planned for my life, I am astounded at the ease and blessings that so freely flow into my life. I truly do feel in those moments that I can soar on wings of eagles, that I can run and not feel weary and I can walk and not faint.

I pray that we can take courage from the words of Isaiah this week as his message turns from doom and destruction to a message of Love, forgiveness and peace for our lives. Our God truly is an Awesome God who knows each and every one of you more deeply than you even know yourself. He knows your strengths, your weaknesses, your addictions and your talents. He wants you to know that He has a plan for your life that will lead your path through the darkness and despair up the mountain above the clouds and into the warmth of His light, the peace of His presents, the forgiveness in His embrace. May we each follow His path that He has laid for us, is my prayer

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.