

I Connect

Lesson for 4Oct2020

Concerns and Praises

Prayer

[Isaiah 1:18 \(to :\)](#)

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord:

Commentary

Reason together is translated from the Hebrew word *yākah*. Like its use throughout the book of Job (see example in 13:3, Citation 6), here *yākah* alludes to elements of a trial. In this case, God is arguing for the obedience of His people.

[Isaiah 45:5, 6, 9, 18; Psalms 30:1, 2, 11, 12](#)

5I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

6That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.

9Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

Commentary

Clay is a recurring metaphor for human beings in Scripture. Isaiah 64:8 declares, “O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.” Jeremiah records God’s words: “Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel” (Jeremiah 18:6). And Paul reprises the image in his letter to the Roman Christians: “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay?” (Romans 9:20, 21).

A potsherd is a piece of broken pottery. In biblical times, pottery was used for such household items as dishes, cooking pots, jars, pitchers, lamps, buttons, and toys. Some broken objects were repaired; others were repurposed as surfaces for writing messages, implements for scraping animal skins, or braziers for carrying fire. Many, however, were simply thrown away. To this writer, one who argues with God is as ineffective as a useless shard of pottery.

18For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.

Commentary

While many ancient Near Eastern peoples believed that the world existed in a constant cycle, moving from chaos to order and back again, the Hebrews saw divine intention and progress in God's creation. "The whole of this universe was God's creation," one source writes, "and its stability was due to his continuing and sustaining power."

1I will extol thee, O Lord; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

2O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

11Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

Commentary

Dancing was an element of worship for the Israelites, and is contrasted with mourning in Lamentations as well: "Our dance is turned into mourning" (5:15). An early instance of this form of praise came after the crossing of the Red Sea (see Exodus 15:19).

Sackcloth is a rough, uncomfortable material made from goat or camel hair. In some traditions, clothing made of sackcloth is worn as a sign of penitence—or of sorrow over personal loss or national disaster.

12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

[Deuteronomy 4:35 the](#)

35 the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him.

[Genesis 1:31 \(to 1st.\)](#)

31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.

Question:

If this is true, then should we expect and pray that anything less that we observe or experience can be healed or corrected, but in God's time and under His circumstances?

[Isaiah 52:1 \(to :\), 2, 3, 7, 10](#)

1 Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city:

2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

3 For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.

Commentary

In verses 2 and 3, Jerusalem is depicted as a woman on the ground in an attitude of servitude and grief, held captive by a strap or chain around her neck. Scholars identify *dust* here as degradation, suffering, false teachings, and superstitious beliefs. Shaking off dust and rising to sit in a place of elevation or honor are vivid symbols of freedom from oppression.

A commentary explains God's free redemption of Israel from captivity: "Babylon had no right or claim over Israel. Therefore the Redeemer is under no requirement to pay the ransom money for the enslaved people. The Lord redeems them for his own sake."

7How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

10The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

III John 1:11 (to :)

11Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God:

Jeremiah 23:28 What

28What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.

Job 13:3

3Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God.

II Corinthians 4:6 God, 17, 18

6God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

17For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding

Commentary

Though this letter was written in Greek, Bible authorities point out that the Hebrew word for *glorify* (*kābad*) refers not only to honor but to weight—a correlation Paul would certainly have been aware of in speaking about “eternal” weight.

18While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Question

What do we look at? What do we expect?

Psalms 25:15

15Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

Proverbs 29:7, 8, 13

7The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it.

Commentary

Considereth is interpreted here as active concern for the rights and needs of the poor. A scholar suggests, “These astonishing sayings contradict the notion that wealth is equivalent to righteousness. In them the poor are raised to the highest dignity. They and the rich are regarded as equals, but the poor alone are identified with God.”

Nehemiah 2:1–5, 8 And the, 11, 16, 18–20

1And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.

Commentary

Artaxerxes was a name assumed by several Persian monarchs. This king ruled during the period after King Cyrus freed the Israelites from Babylonian captivity. Many Jews returned to their homeland at that time, but some, including Nehemiah, remained behind under Persian rule.

Although a foreigner, Nehemiah held the responsible position of cupbearer to Artaxerxes. This meant he was a highly trusted aide who ensured that the king’s drink was not poisoned and who guarded the royal living quarters. The Hebrew term for *cupbearer* (*mašqē*) is rendered *butler* in the account of Joseph in Egypt (see Genesis 40).

2Wherfore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

³And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

⁴Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

Question:

Do we immediately turn to God like this?

Commentary

Four months (from Chislev to Nisan) had elapsed between Nehemiah's learning of his city's condition and his request of the king. This period was likely the time of Nehemiah's fasting and prayer (see 1:4). He would probably have known that it was Artaxerxes who ordered cessation of Jerusalem's building after being warned that it had been a rebellious city (see Ezra 4:9–24). Asking the king to overturn his command called for great spiritual resolve.

Though the decrees of Persian rulers were considered irreversible, Artaxerxes had included an escape clause in his mandate—"until another commandment shall be given from me" (Ezra 4:21). So the rebuilding effort wouldn't be an impossibility.

Question:

Nehemiah waited 4 months before telling the King what was happening in his homeland and making his request. Would we be that patient?

Do you think he prayed constantly for God's direction?

⁵And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

⁸And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

¹¹So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

16And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

18Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

19But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

Commentary

Enemy factions virtually surrounded Jerusalem at this time. Ammon, Tobiah's nation, was a pagan kingdom to the east of Judea comprised in part of descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot. Ashdod was a Philistine city west of Judea that became a major Assyrian stronghold. Samaria, antagonistic to Israel and represented by Sanballat, was to the north. Geshem's Arabians have been identified as tribes located south of Judea.

To be a citizen of Jerusalem was deemed a great privilege by many, and only those belonging to the tribes of Israel could live there. Nehemiah specifically denies his opponents any civil, legal, or religious rights in the city.

20Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 6:15, 16

15So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days.

16And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

Psalms 127:1

1 Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain

Romans 8:5, 9 (to 1st .), 16, 17 (to 2nd ;)

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;

John: 30

I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father (which has sent me).