

Comfort for God's People

Key Verse: *“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”*
—Isaiah 51:1

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 51:1-8

asks, “To whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” (Isa. 53:1) The Apostle John referred to this prophecy, saying that Israel as a nation was blind to Jesus despite the many miracles he performed, and their heart was hardened.—John 12:37-41

Paul was in a unique position as a Pharisee prior to becoming a “chosen vessel” to the Gentiles and to the “children of Israel.” (Acts 9:15; 23:6; Phil. 3:5,6) He knew why Israel failed in seeking after God, and in stating the reason he alludes back to Isaiah’s words: “Even though the Gentiles were not trying to follow God’s standards, they were made right with God. And it was by faith that this took place. But the people of Israel, who tried so hard to get right with God by

THE NAME ISAIAH comes from a Hebrew word meaning “Jehovah has saved.” With salvation comes hope, and with hope comes comfort. Known especially for his prophecies pointing to Jesus Christ, Isaiah speaks of him as God’s “arm” in verses 5 and 9 of our lesson. Two chapters later, again prophesying of Jesus, Isaiah

keeping the law, never succeeded. Why not? Because they were trying to get right with God by keeping the law instead of by trusting in him. They stumbled over the great rock in their path.”—Rom. 9:30-32, *New Living Translation*

In a conversation with his disciples, Jesus asked them, “Whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered immediately, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus responded saying, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [a “piece of rock”], and upon this rock [the rock of Christ] I will build my church.”—Matt. 16:15-18

The church, as small individual stones, is built upon the solid foundation “rock” of Messiah and his redemptive work. Peter would doubtless have recalled this conversation when Jesus later spoke the parable of the householder to his religious critics recorded in Matthew 21:33-44. At the conclusion of the parable Jesus told the religious leaders of the Jews, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. ... Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”

Peter later speaks of how the church is being built as a “temple” upon the cornerstone of Christ: “You are coming to Christ, who is the living cornerstone of God’s temple. He was rejected by people, but he was chosen by God for great honor. And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple.” (I Pet. 2:4,5, *NLT*) May the words of Isaiah in our Key Verse strengthen and comfort us as we “follow after righteousness” and “seek the LORD,” looking “unto the rock” of Christ, our perfect pattern and guide, and from whence we are hewn. ■