

“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”
August 21, 2016

Isaiah 42:10–43:28. God’s forgiveness.

Luke 16:1–17:10. The rich man and Lazarus.

Job 9:25–35. Job longs for a mediator between himself and God, a God-man.

COMMENTS:

Isaiah 42:10–43:28. The text begins with an exhortation for people throughout the world to sing praise to God because of the Messiah’s victories over His enemies. This will be a new song of joy from new attitude on the part of God’s people. Note that the topic of praise refers to God’s new works, not on man’s fluctuating feelings. Once God acts to bring justice to *all the earth* through the work of His Messiah, there will be a new reason for these new believers to rejoice and sing God’s praise. Those who are encouraged to “sing” include people from the ends of the earth, implying the involvement of people from every place and the participation of all people. In order to emphasize the universality of this praise, the prophet calls on the sailors who go down to the sea in boats, those who live on distant islands, nomadic desert dwellers, and people in isolated oasis villages in the desert to praise God. By picking out specific groups, the prophet is not limiting God’s praise to only these people identified; instead, these groups represent all people from all walks of life from **all over the world**. In contrast to the coming Kingdom, note Israel’s dismal spiritual condition followed by divine discipline in **42:18-25**. In **chapter 43** the Lord exhorted the nation not to fear (**43:1–7**) for their condition would show the world that He is truly the only God (**43:8–13**). He would restore them from Babylon, bringing them back home in a new “Exodus” (**43:14–28**). Note God’s grace in **43:18-25**: When God forgives and restores His people, He wants them to forget the failures of the past, witness for Him in the present, and claim His promises for the future (**43:18–21**). Why should we remember that which God has forgotten? (**43:25**) He forgave them, not because they brought Him sacrifices—for they had no altar in Babylon—but purely because of His mercy and grace. Apart from grace we would be nobodies going nowhere, except eventually to Hell. There is not one blessing in life that we deserve. We are all products of His grace, not our cleverness, talent, and certainly not because of our goodness.

Luke 16:1–17:10. Note the story of the rich man and Lazarus (**16:16-31**). Jesus tells a story which shows the importance of choosing for God now. There was once a rich man who lived in luxury—while a beggar named Lazarus sat at his gate. One day they both died—and their fortunes were reversed. Lazarus went to heaven—and the rich man went to Hell! In Hell, the rich man asks father Abraham to send Lazarus down with a drink, but Abraham says it can’t be done. There’s a gulf between heaven and hell, which no one can cross. In desperation, the rich man asks that Lazarus at least be sent to warn his brothers what’s in store for them. But Abraham says they have all the warning they need—in the scriptures. What’s more, says he, they won’t be convinced even if someone should rise from the dead. This parable has many important messages—about heaven and hell, death and judgment, and the plight of the hungry in an unfair world. But Jesus’ main point is urgency. The rich man’s five brothers have the scriptures and have heard their message. Everyone is responsible before God for his own life. The rich man obviously had no concept of stewardship, or he would have used part of his wealth to help

Lazarus. It is a mystery why he even allowed the beggar to camp at his front door. Perhaps he thought that providing a place for the man was ministry enough, and it may be that some of his wealthy guests occasionally gave Lazarus alms. Did any of them ever recall what the Old Testament had to say about the care of the poor, such as Proverbs 14:21; 19:17; 21:13; or 28:27? Death is the “great leveler” among all men. We all will die. The rich man died in spite of his wealth and “was buried,” no doubt with an expensive funeral. But when Lazarus died, he was carried to Abraham’s bosom. What a difference! Perhaps the beggar’s body did not even have a decent burial, though the Jews were usually compassionate in such cases. Lazarus certainly did not have the traditional Jewish funeral, with its paid mourners, costly spices, and elaborate tomb. After Lazarus’ body was taken away, the neighbors probably said, “Well, we’re glad he’s not around anymore!” But death is not the end; it is the beginning of a whole new existence in another world. For the Christian, death means to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1–8; Phil. 1:21). For the unbeliever, death means to be away from God’s presence and in torment. A contrast in eternity. Hades is the temporary realm of the dead as they await the judgment. The permanent place of punishment for the lost is “Hell,” the Lake of Fire. One day, death will give up the bodies and hades will give up the souls, and the lost will stand before Christ in judgment (Rev. 20:10–15).

Job 9:25–35. In **verse 25** Job expresses the idea that time was running out for him. He illustrates this with images of king’s messengers that hasten to their destinations, and the papyrus boats in Egypt that skim swiftly down the river, and the eagle that swoops down from the sky. Perhaps Job should take a more positive attitude toward his afflictions, forget his pain, and smile (**9:27**). But would that change anything? No! He would still be guilty before God, rejected by his friends, and sitting on an ash heap in sickness and pain. Even if he took a bath and changed clothes as an act of public contrition and cleansing, he would still fear what God might do. Job is convinced that God is against him and that any steps he takes on earth will be nullified by Heaven. The defendant can smile and put on a brave front in court, but that doesn’t keep the judge from saying, “Guilty!” These thoughts drive Job to say ‘If only I had a mediator!’ (**9:32–35**). If God were a man, then Job could approach him and plead his case. Or if there were a “daysman” (mediator, umpire, מוֹכֵיץ) between God and Job, he could take away the rod of judgment and bring Job and God together. But God is not man, and there is no mediator! This is where Jesus Christ enters the picture! Jesus is God and became man to reveal the Father (John 14:7–11) and to bring sinners to God (1 Tim. 2:5–6; 1 Peter 3:18). He is the “daysman” that Job was pleading for centuries ago, one who could quite literally ‘lay His hand on both us and God and bring us together’ (**9:33**) as *one*!

Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Pastor Don