

No other Rock

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[0 : 00] We're in a series in Isaiah, Isaiah 40-55. And just, you know, as you're turning there, we're going to be reading in verses from 6-23 today.

Before we get in there, just a reminder of where we're at over the last few weeks as we've been seeing the living God speaking to his people, the Israelites, and speaking to us in many ways. He is reassuring God's people, the Israelites, after they've been kicked out of Israel, reassuring them of his character towards them and why things happen the way they do.

And he's been reminding them of his character. We've seen a few things. We've seen that he's reminding that he's a God that never abandons and always restores.

We've seen that he's a God that gives new life always by grace. We saw last week that our hearts are like wildernesses, but God pours rivers of living water and makes them alive.

[1 : 02] And last week we saw in that that God's people were tempted to look for new life inside themselves instead of it being given to them by God.

That's what we saw. That was the temptation that we saw last week. Yet what we see in this passage today is that the temptations don't die down. Now the temptation is not to look inside themselves for new life, but it's to look at the Babylonian idols as if they give it.

Not to look inside themselves. They're now looking outside themselves, but they're looking to the Babylonian idols as if they give new life. You can understand the appeal, right? Babylon seems to this nation, big nation, powerful nation, seem to be doing well for themselves.

Babylon are not being carried out of their homeland like Israel are. And so it brings natural curiosity to Israel. What if they, this nation, what if they've got it right?

What if we should just do as the Babylonians do and make gods for ourselves like they do? They seem to be working all right for them.

[2 : 19] Maybe we should do the same. Now we in, you know, the 21st century, we live in a world where the living God, Jesus Christ, is not worshipped everywhere, where lifestyles and choices are not directed by the God of the Bible.

People put their trust in things, in perhaps other, yeah, in things. And we can have that same natural curiosity that Israel had for Babylon.

And perhaps doubt. What if the people who are not coming to church, who are not, what if they've got it right? Should we just follow suit?

Perhaps we feel sometimes ourselves like leaning on our job to support us. Perhaps we feel like leaning on our relationships or our health or our bank balance.

But yet when the cracks appear, when the life situations happen, we collapse. The opportunity for us today, as we hear God speak to us, is to ask the question, what if your whole life, your whole life, could rest on someone who never buckles?

[3 : 42] Someone who never shifts, who never collapses under pressure? That's the opportunity for us today. And that's why what the living God says to Israel is relevant to us.

It's relevant to the church. And what it leads to is standing on the living God and resisting that temptation to stand on something else in his place.

Let's dive in to the passage. Isaiah 44, starting at verse 6. This is what the Lord says.

Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty. I am the first and I am the last. Apart from me, there is no God. Who then is like me?

Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people and what is yet to come. Yes, let them foretell what will come.

[4 : 43] Do not tremble. Do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me?

No. There is no other rock. I know not one. All who make idols are nothing and the things they treasure are worthless.

Those who would speak up for them are blind. They are ignorant to their own shame. Who shapes a God and casts an idol which can profit nothing? People who do that will be put to shame.

Such craftsmen are only human beings. Let them all come together and take their stand. They will be brought down to terror and shame. The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals. He shapes an idol with hammers. He forges it with the might of his arm. He goes hungry and loses his strength. He drinks no water and grows faint. The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker.

[5 : 45] He ruffs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses. He shapes it into human form, human form in all its glory, that it may dwell in a shrine.

He cuts down cedars or perhaps took a cypress or oak. He let it grow among the trees of the forest or planted a pine and the rain made it grow. It is used as fuel for burning.

Some of it he takes and warms himself. He kindles a fire and bakes bread. But he also fashions a God and worships it. He makes an idol and bows down to it.

Half of the wood he burns in the fire. Over it he prepares his meal. He roasts his meat and eats his fill. He also warms himself and says, Ah, I am warm, I see the fire. From the rest he makes a God. His idol. He bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, Save me. You are my God.

They know nothing.

[6 : 46] They understand nothing. Their eyes are plastered over so that they cannot see and their minds closed so that they cannot understand. No one stops to think. No one has the knowledge or understanding to say, Half of it I used for fuel.

I even baked bread over its coals. I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood? Such a person feeds on ashes.

A deluded heart misleads him. He cannot save himself or say, Is not this thing in my right hand a lie? Remember these things, Jacob.

For you, Israel, are my servant. I have made you. You're my servant, Israel. I will not forget you. I have swept away your offenses like a cloud.

Your sins like the morning mist. Return to me for I have redeemed you. Sing for joy, you heavens, for the Lord has done this.

[7 : 50] Shout aloud, you earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests, and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob. He displays his glory in Israel.

Let me pray. Almighty God, we come expecting you to speak to us and we come to your word knowing that it is the way you have decided and ordained to communicate with us, to reveal yourself and to reveal more of who we are.

And so I pray for our time together now that you'd move our hearts in Jesus' name. Amen. I think that the headline verse really, it kind of comes at the beginning.

You see verse 8. End of verse 8. What do we read? It kind of frames the whole passage. There is no other, no, there is no other rock.

I know not one. There is no other rock but the Lord. Verse 6, he says, I am the first and I am the last.

[9 : 00] Apart from me, there is no God. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other rock. I know not one. We know in buildings, there is lots of building works going on around here but a building doesn't it, it needs a strong and a well built foundation.

The stability of how a building goes depends on how well it is made, that it is made to the right calculations and that the right materials are you. The concrete itself must be made to the right consistency.

Measured, it's kind of got to be measured so that it's appropriate for the height and weight of what comes above ground. Even after the foundations are completed, they don't go and build straight away but it's checked and assessed by engineers to ensure that nothing has been missed and that it meets the right standards.

Tallest building in the world, any guesses? It's the Burj Khalifa. It's 2,700 feet above ground. It needed, for the Burj Khalifa, just out of interest, its foundations are 164 feet deep.

That's the size of Nelson's column. It needed foundations so deep and so precise that a single calculation would mean collapse. It had to be made of the right stuff with painstaking detail or it

wouldn't stand.

[10:27] When it comes to your life, when it comes to my life, it is the Lord God is the only one that provides stability and support to you in life.

Nothing and no one else is able. There is no other rock but the Lord. And you see what he says about himself, kind of what underpins this is who God is, his character.

I am the first and the last, he says. Apart from me, there is no God. The God of the Bible, this is what, when we read that statement, I'm the first in life, it tells us all about himself, that his existence goes beyond time.

It goes beyond space and it goes beyond anything that we know, our knowledge about our created world. He's before everything. He's present in every moment in history, in every square inch of the cosmos, all at once.

And we know of his power because everything that is and that ever was has been created by him. You think of that. Everything that ever is and ever was and ever is now, the whole of the created order, the stars, you think of the heat and the power of a burning star, that points only, is not even a fraction of the power of the living God.

[11:49] We know of his presence, we know of his existence, how big and grand he is. As soon as you put limits on him, you've shrunk him down. There is nothing that is that doesn't have its origin from the living God.

He is the supreme foundation. The supreme foundation. And everything else rests upon his rule. You see, that, what we know about his character, that is the reason why he's a dependable, immovable rock.

That's why he used this kind of picture language to explain himself. His power, his knowledge of everything, his presence everywhere. You see, what that means for us is, and what it means for him, is there's nothing that surprises him.

There is no one that can take his place and there is no event in your life or mine that he can't handle. Nothing that will make him crumble. He is the rock. He's the sure foundation that you can build your life upon.

He will hold you up. What foundations have we trusted, and maybe in our past, that have shifted beneath us? What foundations have we trusted that have shifted beneath us?

[13:02] Only God can bear the full weight of your life. We have a massive issue in the passage, don't we? The issue is that idols masquerade as dependable rocks.

They masquerade as dependable rocks. As dependable foundations, they appear like they're dependable. They appear steady and stable that we can build our lives on them instead. But if we do, they cause us to crumble and cause life to collapse. You know, it's not like they even support us a little bit. they fail from the get-go.

It's not like, you know, your foundation calculations are just a little bit off. Building your life on anything else but the living God, building it on anything else, it's like making a foundation out of something that's completely not suitable, like not even in the slightest suitable.

Like, funny image, like instead of building out of concrete, using marshmallows. marshmallows. And if you knew that the Burj Khalifa was built on marshmallows, you wouldn't go anywhere near it, would you?

[14:17] It would collapse, that would be a certainty. Idols promise much, but they never deliver. And in turn, those who depend on what we see here become piles of rubble.

Verse 9, not just the idol, but the idol maker, the idol worshiper, all who make idols are nothing, and their things, their treasure are worthless.

Those who make idols are impoverished, spiritually bankrupt. It's like spending all your savings on some pyramid scheme, only to find they've all disappeared, and that you've got nothing to show. Not only is it worthless, but it's foolish. You see the reason why it's foolish? Because they're not even real. Did you notice in our reading how the man made them himself?

The idol is created by the person that turns to it. He creates it himself and then bows down to the thing he's created. Verse 14, we see that.

[15:31] He cuts down cedars, look with me, or perhaps took a cypress or an oak. He let it grow among the tree of the forest or planted a pine and the rain made it grow.

And then here we have it. It is used as fuel for burning. Some of it he takes and warms himself. He kindles the fire and bakes bread. But, he also fashions a god and worships it.

He makes an idol and bows down to it. Half of the wood he burns in the fire. Over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats it his fill. Verse 17, from the rest he makes a god, his idol. He bows down to it and worships, he prays to it and says, save me, you are my god. You see the foolishness of that. Wood burnt and destroyed. The same wood, the same tree carved into a image. And then bowed down to. Now, unless I'm mistaken, I don't think anyone here sort of is doing that. Like, getting trees from the forest and burning them but also making things to bow down to. [16 : 34] they're not worshipping idols in that sense. But you can see how the same idea works in the sort of idols that we create in our minds for ourselves.

It's good to take time to think this through. Common, one, idol, perhaps, that we might choose. Is the idol or perhaps the thirst for money? you know the jealousy a person feels as they scroll through social media seeing people who have more.

Bigger house, newer car, fancy a holiday. And the feeling is that our own life is inadequate. I'll never amount to that.

And the decision is if only I had more money maybe I could buy myself that life as well. Just like the carpenter used the same wood for fire and worship, we use money rightly for daily needs.

We still need to go to the show. Money's not wrong. It's not bad. We still need it to go pay for our bills and go do our shopping. But also we wrongly make it into a god.

[17 : 58] The problem isn't money itself. It's when we expect it to hold us and hold our lives believing it's the answer. It's funny and a bit silly to imagine marshmallow foundations but it's tragic when our lives crumble because we've trusted in them.

Idols masquerade. They promise much but never deliver. And so the good news is we're thankful that we don't put our trust in those but God has moved in our heart that we have a rock that we can depend on.

One who is immovable. One we can stand on. One we can build our lives on. Who can take the weight of our lives. Who can take the weight of our sin and who can take the weight of our suffering. Jesus Christ is that dependable rock. He is our sure foundation. And the reason we know that's true is because of the gospel. You see Jesus is crushed like fragile clay so that we can stand on solid rock.

You'll know as we read this it reminds us of Exodus 20 the first and second commandments what we read. The first commandment you shall have no other gods before me.

[19 : 25] Second commandment you shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth below. That's idolatry. That's exactly what Jesus is accused of in his trial.

He's accused as a blasphemer. That's what blasphemy is. It's the action of wrongly attributing worship and faith to something that's not God. That's what he's accused of.

Jesus is accused as a blasphemer because he presents himself as equal which he is he presents himself as equal to Yahweh the God of the Bible. And so he's accused and he's treated as a blaspheming idolater because he's saying that he makes himself to be the rock that we read of here in Isaiah.

He's saying that he is the same God. I am the first and I am the last. The all powerful all knowing ever present God of the Old Testament is the same God. It's Jesus Christ.

We know it's not blasphemy because that is who he is. And it's for all our blaspheming idolatry when we've done the big issue.

[20 : 47] The true and living God, the first and the last, is counted as guilty and suffers as an idolater, but he's the true rock who takes our place. Verse 22, I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist.

All the times we've attempted to build our life on shaky foundations, he sweeps them away like a cloud, like the morning mist that disappears. You know around this part of the neck of the woods we get the ha that comes off the fourth in the morning and it does, it's gone by lunchtime.

It's a we have someone that we can build our lives on that will never let us down.

The question from the beginning, what if your whole life could rest on someone who never buckles, never shifts, never collapses under pressure? Well, his body buckled at the cross, but he will never buckle again under the weight of your sin.

He'll never buckle again because he was raised to new life that will never buckle again. This is what happens when you make Jesus your rock.

[22 : 31] You're standing not only on his death in your place, but you're also standing on the resurrection life that he's given to you. And his resurrection eternal life that will never fade, what it means is that his life working in you and through you will never fade either.

Whatever situation you're facing life, you can stand on Jesus and he will support you indefinitely. You contrast that to the old way of living when we perhaps even still now put our trust in shaky foundations.

The old way of life that says do everything to get more money and a bigger bank balance, even use people as collateral damage to get where you need to be. money, just so that you can perhaps feel like you're dependent on yourself, that more money will save you.

It might give you the same life as the person next door. That's what the old life promises. But it's where you collapse when it doesn't work out.

But the new life in Jesus, you see what the new life in Jesus is? He says it in verse 22. This is the opportunity for us this morning. Verse 22, He says, return to me, for I have redeemed you.

[23 : 54] He says, I will give you what money can't buy. He's telling us the relief and safety and security, I will give you, I will keep you forever in every situation. That money can't buy, you become immovable and unshakable in Jesus because you're built on him, on his life, on his resurrection life.

Apart from him there is no God. This is God's grace to us. So it's God's grace to Israel, it's God's grace to his church. Verse 21, remember these things, Jacob, for you, Israel, and my servant, I've made you, you're my servant, Israel, I will not forget you, for I have redeemed you.

Jesus makes himself your rock, he lifts you up and stands you on himself by grace. By grace. God's grace. That means it's not your responsibility to be strong.

It's not your responsibility to be strong. I must be strong to get through. I must be strong. How often, just be, you know, that encouragement. We know that sometimes if people are going through hard times, we might even say that because it sounds good.

Oh, you know, just be courageous, just be strong. Try, you know, you're stronger than you think. You don't need to be the strong one.

[25 : 11] You don't need to be strong to try and make it through because Jesus himself says, you stand on me to be strong and you get my resurrection life that keeps you going. He lifts you up and stands you on himself by grace.

Jesus makes you stand. Return to me. Returning to God means admitting that we've already collapsed.

That we're already rubble on the floor. Returning to God is letting Jesus stand you on himself. That he's your solid ground.

We've tried to stand on things, we've tried to be strong but we couldn't support us. But we can now stand on Jesus. It's admitting that we can't stand unless Jesus comes and supports us.

He must come and be our rock and if he doesn't we won't make it. It's admitting that. That's what it means to return to him. He'll be our rock.

[26 : 15] There is no other. It's where the change comes in your life because of the work of the rock in your life. Standing tall because without him we'd fall.

when storms hit houses anchored to bedrock don't move. The wind and the rain still batter the outside of the house.

It's still felt, doesn't disappear but the house doesn't move. That's what it means to stand on Jesus. It doesn't mean you'll breeze through but you won't move because you're stood on the immovable one. Apart from Jesus there is no other rock.

Let me pray. Let me pray. Almighty God I thank you that you give us this opportunity today.

[27 : 21] Each new day you give it to return to you. And we want to admit and confess that there are moments and times in our lives when we've attempted to be strong ourselves.

We've attempted to stand on things that collapse. And as we've done that we are the ones who have ended up like rubble on the ground. But you Lord you've put us back together.

And you Lord by your grace you've stood us, you have been the one that we can stand upon. The one who never buckles because you were buckled on the cross.

Your body was buckled. You were crushed. For our sake. And now we have this new resurrection life, the life of Jesus that is given to us that we can depend on.

Help us Lord to live out of that place, the people that you've made us. When life hits, it may be hitting today, but at some point it probably will in the future for all of us.

[28 : 36] Would you work in our hearts so that we would always return to you? Would you keep us and never put our trust in things that will be to our disadvantage?

And so I ask that you bless us and help us in this, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.