

Explore the Bible: September 27

God Reigns • Isaiah 23:8-18

By Don Hicks



Hicks

Last week's Sunday School lesson preview began saying: "The boldest and most meaningful promise in human history is recorded for us in Isaiah 7: 'Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel' (Isaiah 7:14, KJV). The most important, the boldest, part of Isaiah's prophecy is when he says 'and shall call his name Immanuel' which the New Testament tells us means God with us. Nothing is more significant than the creator, God, promising to be with us.

Isaiah was no stranger to bold pronouncements of great truths. The title of this week's lesson is a bold understatement of an eternal truth: "God Reigns." Bold though the title, "God Reigns" is an accurate summary of Isaiah's teaching in the 23rd chapter of his prophecy. Our focal passage begins: "Whose plan was this against Tyre, the city of battlements, whose merchants were princes and her traders the most honored men on earth? The LORD of Hosts planned it..." (Isaiah 23:8-9a, The New English Bible).

The title "LORD of Hosts" – or as the Christian Standard Bible says "The LORD of Armies" – is the beginning of Isaiah's

attempt to explain to us God's power to reign in any and all circumstances. As an example of who God could reign and rule over, Isaiah chooses Tyre. Terry J. Betts, in our current pupils' quarterly, reminds us that Tyre was about three millennia old and known as a great center of trade for the known world.

Isaiah explained Tyre's prominence by stating, "...whose merchants were princes and her traders the most honoured men on earth." Some of us, as proud Americans, might use such terms to explain the prominence of the United States in world trade. I only point this out so we will not miss the application of the teaching that God's rule applies to every people group and nation, regardless of their wealth and power.

The importance of our realizing that God reigns over the most powerful of this world is only underscored when the elderly Apostle John refers in Revelation 18:23 to the fact, "Your traders were once the merchant princes of the world, and with your sorcery you deceived all the nations" (The New English Bible). The author of The Revelation using the words, "Your traders were once the merchant princes of the world," clearly and intentionally refers to the Old Testament prophecy that we are studying.

A very major question for us would be the "why" question, which is answered in Isaiah 23:9. The New International Version reads, "The LORD Almighty planned it, to bring low the pride of all glory and to humble all who are renowned on the earth." We must be humble if we are to recognize God is in charge and has full control of this world. It is much too easy for us as human beings to take credit for our good lives when things are going well: "I have worked hard, earned a good education, and learned to do my job well. Therefore, I deserve my good salary, beautiful home, nice car (or truck or van)."

Such thoughts cause us to forget God reigns. Because God loves us, He will remind us of our dependence on Him. King Solomon

wrote in Proverbs, "A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish [stubborn] son [who refuses to learn] is a grief to his mother. Treasures of wickedness and ill-gotten gain do not profit, but righteousness and moral integrity in daily life rescues from death. The LORD will not allow the righteous to hunger [God will meet all his needs], but He will reject and cast away the craving of the wicked" (Proverbs 10:1-3, AMP). The more familiar wording of verse three is: "The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish" (KJV).

The Apostle Paul writes, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, NIV).

God reigns to wash, sanctify, and justify you for eternal life with Him.

Hicks is associational missions director for Jasper Association in Bay Springs.