

The Book of Isaiah
Chapters 41-48

Review of Chapter 40

- 1st 39 chapters—Babylonian exile promised
- But, despite that coming reality, God can be trusted
- Promises to deliver (40:1-11)

O Zion, You who bring good tidings, Get up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, You who bring good tidings, Lift up your voice with strength, Lift it up, be not afraid; Say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" 10 Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him. 11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young. Isaiah 40:9-11 NKJV

- God has the ability to deliver (40:12-26)

(He is Creator—12-14; He is incomparable—15-26)

"To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing. Isaiah 40:25-26 NKJV

- Need to wait patiently on God's deliverance (27-31)

But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31 NKJV

Overview of 41-48

- 41-46—Repetitive themes—some increasing specificity
- 47—Draws conclusions regarding Babylon
- 48—Call to trust and believe
- 41-46—3 segments, then 47 and 48 each their own segment

I. Segment #1 41:1-42:9

A. Imagining court case between God and idols. Who is the real God?

"Keep silence before Me, O coastlands, And let the people renew their strength! Let them come near, then let them speak; Let us come near together for judgment. Isaiah 41:1 NKJV

NOTE: God invites the nations to hear the evidence—once presented there will be no doubt He can deliver from captivity.

(ILL) Reminiscent of Elijah on Mt. Carmel

B. Rhetorical question and answer (2-4)

1. One from East? Cyprus (see 45:1)—Map
2. God is not “part” of process like heathen kings—stands out of time and calls it into being
3. The nations had no way to stand up to the plan of God—so attempted to make strong idols (5-7)
 - a. Idols are a product of fear
 - b. Idols are a response to an event
 - c. God rules over history

C. God’s people need not fear (41:8-20)

1. Obviously more powerful than idols
2. God has not forgotten His promise to Abraham (8, 9)
3. Just as He brought them out, He will keep them (10)
4. God will protect from enemies (11-16)
5. From frail and helpless to strong and mighty

"Fear not, you worm Jacob, You men of Israel! I will help you," says the Lord And your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. 15 "Behold, I will make you into a new threshing sledge with sharp teeth; You shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, And make the hills like chaff. Isaiah 41:14-15 NKJV

6. God will do what it takes to save His people (16-20)

(ILL) These people are in a position of fear, not the security of homeland with temple. God is trustworthy is the message of Isaiah.

D. A second case against idols (41:21-29)

1. Present your case, bring forth reasons

"Present your case," says the Lord. "Bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob. 22 "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. Isaiah 41:21-22 NKJV

2. Challenged to give evidence they can predict the future (23)

NOTE: V. 23 is almost a divine taunt. "Do something!" Good or bad, again, reminiscent of Elijah

3. Because they do not answer—God pronounces judgment (v. 24)
4. Cyrus again—(25-27)—East of Babylon but north (Cyrus-(Persians)-capture Babylon 539 BC

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 3 Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. Ezra 1:2-4 NKJV

5. Judgment pronounced on idol worshippers (41:28, 29)

E. Messiah prediction (42:1-9)

1. Servant or servant (see 41:8)
 - a. Servant Israel is fearful and blind but God loves him and will deliver to show the nations that He is indeed God.
 - b. Here, Servant—always obedient to God and will bring justice to nations, a light to the nations and a covenant to His people Israel (42:1-5).
 - c. See 42:6-7—not Israel but one who works for Israel.
2. Predictive prophecy—3 purposes
 - a. Calling to obedience—brings future blessing
 - b. Encouraging faith—God is not surprised
 - c. Confirms God's trustworthiness when fulfilled

(ILL) Coming of Christ not for timeline but to build faith

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3. Truths about Servant Messiah
 - a. Messiah to bring order and justice (42:3)
 - b. Worldwide ministry (42:1, 4, 6)
 - c. Order not through strength, but weakness

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:5-8 NKJV

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. Matthew 10:24 NKJV

II. Segment #2 (42:10-44:22)

A. Certainty of God's deliverance (42:10-43:7)

1. Called to praise (42:10-17)
 - a. All creation called to praise (10-12)
 - b. If God can deliver Judah, He can deliver all the earth (13)
 - c. God has kept quiet while Judah was in exile but now He is going to act (14-17)
 - Smooth way of travel
 - Lead blind
 - Those who trust idols will have no help (17)

B. Expanding God's promise of deliverance (42:19-43:7)

1. Their exile was not God's failure—He sent them there because they failed (42:18-25)
 - a. Can't help themselves (18-20)
 - b. God tried to draw them but they resisted (21, 22)
 - c. He called them to hear but still they rejected (23-25)
2. Grace displayed after judgment (43:1-7)
 - a. Redemption is a completed fact (43:1, 2) as He is born Creator and Redeemer

IMPORTANT: The fire and water of v. 2 was judgment but not meant to destroy.

- b. Key is relationship (v. 3, 5)

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- c. The God who is beyond the stars wants personal relationship with them.
- d. Promise of covenant-keeping (43:5-7)
 - Even if parents don't come home—God will gather the children
 - Enemy must think he has annulled the ancient promises to Israel—not so!
 - God's promises and purposes will not fail—Israel created for His glory and their purpose will be realized

TRUTH

- 1. God wants personal relationship with us.
- 2. Since God's purposes will be realized does this lead us to determinism? Perfect and permissible will of God. He has created a cause and effect world.

C. Another courtroom scene (43:8-13)

- 1. Served Israel, blind and deaf mentality
- 2. Has any idol foretold this? (v. 9)
- 3. God's people can testify to His faithfulness (10-13)

D. God promises to deliver (43:14-21)

- 1. Deliverance from Babylon will come (14, 15).
- 2. Invited to remember Exodus (16, 17)
- 3. Forgot that (18)
- 4. God is not predictable—He will do a new thing (19-21)

(ILL) Cyprus and Persians—Daniel 5

E. Judah's present condition (43:22-28)

- 1. Step back from glorious predicted future
- 2. A look at present reality
- 3. Their rituals have been void of worship (43:22-24)

*"Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
Amos 5:25 NKJV*

You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' And you sneer at it," Says the Lord of hosts. "And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; Thus you bring an offering! Should I accept this from your hand?" Says the Lord. Malachi 1:13 NKJV

4. They thought sacrifices were what brought forgiveness but He wanted hearts. They could not manipulate Him to forgive. He does that on His own (43:25-28).
5. We worship because of forgiveness not to secure it.

F. A new work is on its way (44:1-5)

1. Destruction is not the final word.
2. God has not given upon them.
3. He had found a way to forgive but not deny justice and a way to change their hearts.
4. Spirit outpouring promised identity.
5. Then they will be glad to identify themselves as belonging to God

G. Ultimate railing against idols (44:6-22)

1. Reasserts God's uniqueness (6-8)
2. Unstable and untrustworthy idols (9-20)
 - a. Worthlessness of idols (10, 11)
 - b. Hard to make idols when all the while a true God is available (12-17)
 - c. How can a god, fashioned by humans who use leftovers as firewood, ever save a person?
 - d. All who think it can are blind (18)
 - e. Humanity seems to have lost all sense of logical reason (19, 20)

(ILL) Evolution

H. A call of hope (44:21, 22)

Consider:

- Such blunt language today is considered intolerant—the only sin left in America.
- How dare you call my god “worthless!”
- Emperor's New Clothes
- Truth is absolute

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. John 3:12-13 NKJV

- We must stand against fake gods!

III. Segment #3 (44:23-47:15)

A. God as Redeemer (44:23-45:13)

1. Call to praise (44:23)
 - a. His act of redemption
 - b. Brings glory to Himself

B. God's redemption plans (44:24-28)

1. Redeemer named-Cyrus
2. He is the one who will say rebuild the temple

(28)

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 3 Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. Ezra 1:2-4 NKJV

C. God's commission of Cyrus (45:1-8)

1. Anointed by God and victorious because of God's hand (45:1-3)
2. Two times called by name

I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the Lord, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. 4 For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. Isaiah 45:3-4 NKJV

- a. Underscores that this is prediction prophecy
- b. Compared to idols (see 41:21-24)
3. Evidence of Yahweh's Lordship—he knows the name of one who does not know His (v. 4, 5)
4. No one like Yahweh (6)
5. Sovereignty of God upheld (7, 8)

D. God's right to do this thing (9-13)

(To use someone who doesn't know Him to fulfill His purpose)

NOTE: Again, insisting on the exclusivity of Christ is not wrong—God expects it. We do the world a disservice if we do not tell them that their God's cannot save.

E. Yahweh seen as the only God able to save (45:14-25)

1. All nations streaming to Israel (45:14)
2. Idol worshippers left hopeless (45:15, 16)
3. God's people saved (45:17)
4. God's ability to claim such a thing (45:18, 19)
5. Invitation to heathen nations to turn toward God (45:20-22)

NOTE: Not universalism—those who reject will be ashamed (45:23-25)

F. The exclusive God (46:1-7)

1. Babylonian gods have to be carried
2. They got carried by one to captivity
3. Instead of being saved by their gods they have to save them
4. God carries us—not us carry Him
5. Comparison again in v. 7

G. Final call to idol worshippers (46:8-13)

1. Have not gone into exile yet
2. Will they trust Yahweh even during exile?
3. Will there be any to follow Cyrus?

I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8 NKJV

IV. The end for Babylon (Chapter 47)

NOTE: Most believe this to be a self-contained poem depicting the fall of Babylon

A. Babylon's humiliation (1-4)

1. The oppressor now oppressed
2. God of Israel accomplishes this

B. Babylon's false pride (5-11)

1. Thought they could get away with anything (6)
2. Self-trust (8, 10)

C. Babylon's helplessness (47:12-15) "No one shall save you!" (15)

TRUTH: "Intelligence not surrendered to God can be a terrible curse for the human race."

"Rich in things, poor in soul." (Harry Emerson Fosdick)

- America and ethics
- Will we humble ourselves?

V. Listen: A stirring call to faith (48)

A. Opening words (1, 2)

NOTE: Calls out Judah's hypocrisy

B. Israel's God (3-11)

1. Has predicted future and all come true (3)
2. Idol can claim no credit (4, 5)
3. New things to come (6-11)

C. God appeals to His people (12-22)

1. Commanded to listen 3 time (12, 14, 16)
2. Why they should listen? (12-16)
 - a. He is Creator (12, 13)
 - b. Lord of History (14, 15)
 - c. God is a speaking God (16)
3. Summary statement (17-22)
 - a. Reminder of who God is (17)
 - b. Had they listened before they would be in a better place now (18, 19)
 - c. If they believe now, God can deliver (20, 21)
 - d. But, they must change their ways (22)

Conclusion Biblical Worldview

(ILL) J. Walsh The Green Book 1982

- Forced to leave a dying planet to colonize a distant one
- What books are brought?
- The Odyssey, Grimm's Fairy Tale
- Despite Bible being the best seller—no one brought it
- Yet, its single story most shaped the world

TODAY—Worldview of continuing—no real possibility of change. We are caught in endless cycles—cannot be escaped

- Ancient world fate
- Still today—no hope of transcending your past
- It's the worldview that stands counter to scripture and the only one offered besides the Bible
- Testimony of Scripture

It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, And its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, And spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. Isaiah 40:22 NKJV

- He can break into our lives and do something that has never been done.
- Israel does not have to stay enslaved to Babylon
- We can leave our Babylon too
- We can lose the guilt and shame and walk free again
- Our faith can be changed
- He can do a new thing