

"I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images!" (Isaiah 42:8)

In last week's lesson, on Isaiah 41:21-31, God, in a courtroom-like scene, challenged the idols of the surrounding nations of Israel to "present their case" to prove their legitimacy by predicting things to come, as the Lord had done, e.g., in predicting the dispersion of the Assyrians from invading Jerusalem! "Do something," He defiantly summoned!

But they, of course, were not able to provide any kind of response at all! And the Lord God, the great Judge of all the world, responded by issuing His verdict and indictment: declaring that they (the idols!) "were of no account, their work amounted to nothing, and those who choose them are an abomination"!

Then He declared something that only He could bring about: He would "arouse one from the north" (later revealed as Cyrus, king of Persia) who would arise "to trample on the rulers of the nations as upon mortar, as the potter treads the clay" (and free a remnant of Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to rebuild Jerusalem)!

Isaiah closes Isaiah 41 with God's words summoning all people of the world to "behold" the falsity and "worthless works" of the idols--and molten images which are nothing but "wind and emptiness"!

And, interestingly, Isaiah 42 begins with the same word "behold" (a word used in Scripture always to announce something significant to come)!

"Behold My Servant, whom I uphold! My Chosen, in whom My soul delights!" Immediately drawing a great and pivotal contrast between "beholding" the folly of idols, and idol worshipers, and the One in whom the Almighty Father God of all heaven and earth "upholds and delights"!

Who is this "Servant of God" revealed here (in verses 1-4) by God Himself to Isaiah? Although unnamed, obviously Jesus, the Son of God, and Israel's long-awaited Messiah--in whom God would put His Spirit and who would (at some point in time) "bring justice to the world"!

Interestingly, Matthew 3:13-17 records how that after Jesus, during His first advent, was baptized by John the Baptist, "the Spirit of God descended as a dove upon Him and behold (there it is again!) a voice out of heaven said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased'!" Likewise at the "transfiguration," recorded in Matthew 17:18!

Motyer writes that "the Servant steps onto the stage here specifically to perform a world-wide task of revelation, the Lord's remedy for the emptiness, and particularly the absence of a sure word of God, which marks the Gentile world"!

But when would "justice" come to the world? And when would the Gentile nations "place their hope" in Him? Isaiah doesn't say! (But it's coming!)

Basically, these words (in verses 1-4) describe and are fulfilled by the ministry of Jesus in His first advent, and are quoted verbatim in Matthew 12:9-21--where Jesus would arrive "not with a political agenda and great fanfare" but with "gentleness and meekness" (Motyer described His bearing as "unobstentatious" and "unself-advertising"), while "displaying His deity by healing the sick, raising the dead, and liberating people from demons." But, as MacArthur notes, He seems "concerned about the potential zealotry of

those who would try to press Him into the conquering hero mode that the rabbinical experts had made out of messianic prophecy" (not understanding the mission of Christ's first advent)!

In verses 5-9 God identifies Himself for the reader as the transcendent One who created the heavens and established and sustains the earth--and gives "life and breath" to its inhabitants! Motyer notes, "Not the product of a self-existing evolutionary surge but the direct act of the Creator God"!

He's the One who appointed "His Servant" as a "covenant to the people an a light to the nations, to open blind eyes...and bring out prisoners from the dungeons and those who dwell in darkness from the prison"!

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Then another "behold," in verse 9, where He declares that "former things have come to pass," speaking, according to Motyer, about "the work of the conqueror," in Isaiah 41 (as good as done)--and the "new things" to come, speaking of the coming "redemptive work of His Servant" (His Son, Jesus!)

All of which calls for a "new song" to be sung (Motyer says)"as a fresh display of the goodness of God"!

The whole world is summoned to join in and give glory to the Lord! All those who "dwell on the islands and in the cities of the wilderness areas," even in Kedar (in the southwestern desert of Arabia, which Nebuchadnezzar would conquer before coming to destroy Jerusalem), and even in Sela (part of Edom, which denied access through their land to the children of Israel on their journey from Egypt to the "promised land")! "Let them all sing and give glory to the Lord!" (Better come while they can!)

The time will come (speaking apparently about the tribulation period, when the Lord, through His Servant, "will go forth like a man of war" to judge the world and, verse 13 says, "He will prevail"!

He "has kept His silence for a long time," as He has from the beginning, notes MacArthur, "until the time is ripe for Him to intervene in human affairs"!

II Peter 23:9-10 says, "The Lord is not slow about His promises, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance! But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night...." (And you know the rest!)

Our lesson culminates with the promise that the sovereign God, through His Servant, will both "lead the blind so they might see the way," but (according to MacArthur) "utterly repudiate and put to shame" those who trust in idols, and say to molten images, "you are our gods"!

Give glory to our God--and trust only in Him!

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