

"You are My witnesses," declares the Lord, "and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He! Before Me no god was formed, nor will there be one after Me!" (Isaiah 43:10)

In our prior lesson (on Isaiah 42:18-25), we saw how the Lord chastened His people, Israel--whom He had called to be a servant, and messenger to the nations--for being "blind and deaf" to all the many things that He had revealed to them (and thus not able to be a light to the nations that He called them to be)! As a result, He allowed them to be "plundered and looted" (and taken into captivity in Babylon)!

It was against God that they had sinned, "in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey..." and so Isaiah writes (in the most picturesque of language!) that "He poured out on them the heat of His anger and the might of battle, setting them on fire all around," but that they (still!) "did not take it to heart"!

And so Isaiah 42 ends with a sad commentary on the response of God's people in Isaiah's time (drawing a telling contrast between the disobedient ones chosen to be God's servant, and messenger, and the one Servant (speaking, prophetically, of Christ, the messiah) who would prove to obey Him perfectly in a day yet to come!

But then (!) Isaiah breaks through with words and a message from God in chapter 43 that should have brought great comfort (and hope!) for all His people (and that would include us)! Despite their sin, God hadn't forgotten, or "cast away, His people"! Note what He says!

"But now(!), thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel; Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you! For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior..."! Wow!

Motyer writes that "with marvelous dramatic sense we are moved from considering the people under the fire of the Lord (in Isaiah 42:25), and justly so, to the Lord promising that the fire will not burn them"! Because He has "formed" them and "chosen" them, and "redeemed" them, and "called" them, they have nothing to fear! He loves them, and they are His! (As Constable notes, they are His, not for "who" they are ('blind and deaf'), but for "whose" they are! His!) He was their Redeemer there was no other Savior besides Him!

He would deliver ("redeem") His people from captivity in Babylon (in a "second exodus") just like He had delivered them from Egypt years before--making a way for them through the wilderness and providing water along the way! He was their "Redeemer" and "Savior" and there was no other one besides Him!

MacArthur notes that God's redemption of His people from exile is not to be complete "until His Servant returns to reign over the faithful remnant in the promised land"--and that the limited return from Babylon only typified the final return"! Still to come! (Yet "a third and more glorious 'exodus' will take place when the Messiah returns to regather His people (from the "four corners of the earth," as described in verses 5-6) and establish His millennial reign on earth!

Verse 19 describes it as "something new" that God will bring forth! In fact, "deliverance of the nation in the past will pale into insignificance in comparison with the future deliverance the Lord will give His people" (says MacArthur)

"Behold, days are coming," says the Lord (in Jeremiah 16:14!

In the messianic age, Israel will finally give praise to God and He will use Israel once again to demonstrate to the world in a fresh way that He is the only Savior and Lord! The only way!

During the time of Isaiah, however (and largely throughout her history), Israel has not really "chosen" God, even though He has chosen them! Verses 22-24 depict a people who have "not honored the Lord with their sacrifices and worship but, rather, burdened Him with their sins...and wearied Him with their iniquities"!

Constable writes that "it was sin, not captivity, that was the root trouble that needed dealing with for the Israelites (as it is for all people) and that later (in Isaiah 53:10-12) Isaiah would reveal how God would deal with sin through the Servant's ministry"! (Sin that verse 27 says "goes back to their first forefathers"!)

It's in this context that Isaiah records God's great promise in verse 25: "I, even I, am the One who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins!" Some have called this verse the high point of grace in the Old Testament! MacArthur notes that "in spite of Israel's utter unworthiness, the Lord in His grace has devised a way that He can forgive their sins and grant righteousness without compromising His holiness"! (And that applies to everyone one of us who trusts in Christ! Hallelujah!)

There's song sung by the Hillsong choir, which you can find on YouTube, and which beautifully captures the spirit and essence of this whole section of Isaiah, and I would encourage you to listen to it! Isaiah 43!

I will not fear!

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