



• God's certain promise – rescue from Babylon

Israel may be blind and deaf¹, but God has redeemed them before and will redeem them again². The promise is certain³. They will be rescued from Babylon⁴.

1 42:18-25
2 43:1-7
3 43:8-13
4 43:14-21

Picture of a courtroom – God is the judge

Once again Isaiah uses the picture of a courtroom with witnesses and observers and God as the presiding Judge. First the people of Israel are brought into the court. All the nations are among the crowds watching what is happening.

⁸*He has brought out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.*

⁹*All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble.*

• Has anyone announced any of God's works in advance?

The question is: has anyone (Israelite, pagan observer, idol) ever announced any of the mighty works of God in advance?

Who among them told this and made us hear the first things? Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were in the right. Let them hear and say, 'It is true.'

• The prophets foretell events

The more we grasp hold of the message of Isaiah and his fellow-prophets, and the more we attend to minute accuracy of interpretation, the more we can see God's foretelling events centuries before they happened.

God addresses Israel:

¹⁰*'You are my witnesses,' – it is an oracle of Yahweh – 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and discern that I am he.'*

• We have seen predictions and watched them being fulfilled

The people of God can see more than anyone how amazingly God told them in advance what would happen. Even now we know – if no one else knows! – that our world will never save itself, that only the gospel can change nations, that all nations will be reached, that Jesus will come. We know these things. We are the witnesses. We have seen the predictions before and we have watched them being fulfilled. (Of course it requires detailed Bible-study if we are to see the Scriptures fulfilled in the past and in the present!) We – Israel and gentiles who have been grafted into 'Israel' – are meant to be the servant of God, witnessing to the nations.

• We are meant to be the servant of God, witnessing to the nations

Our testimony:

What is it that we give testimony to? (i) The Lord's uniqueness as the only God, the only Saviour.

(i) The Lord's uniqueness as the only God and Saviour

'Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. ¹¹I, even I, am Yahweh, and apart from me there is no saviour.'

(ii) Our experience of God's closeness

What is it that we give testimony to? (ii) Our experience of God's closeness.

¹²*'It is I who have told and saved and proclaimed. There was no stranger among you. You are my witnesses' – it is an oracle of Yahweh – 'that I am God.'*

(iii) Our confidence that God will continue to be our deliverer

What is it that we give testimony to? (iii) Our confidence that God will continue to be our deliverer.

*¹³Even today also I am he.
No one can deliver out of my hand.
When I act, who can reverse it?’*

We may have been blind and deaf, but let us open our eyes, open our ears – and then open our mouths, for God.

People will be exiled to Babylon, but God will redeem them

Now Isaiah becomes very explicit. For the first time in this section of the book (beginning with 40:1) ‘Babylon’ is explicitly mentioned. The people will go to exile in Babylon, but then the day will come when God will redeem them from Babylon.

*¹⁴This is what Yahweh says,
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
‘For your sake I will send to Babylon
and bring down as fugitives all of them,
the Chaldeans in the ships about which they shout aloud.
¹⁵I am Yahweh, your Holy One,
Israel’s Creator, your King.’*

• Rescue for the exiles

Just as God overthrew Pharaoh and made a way for Israel to escape Egypt, he will do something similar for the exiles.

*¹⁶This is what Yahweh says,
he who made a way through the sea,
a path through the mighty waters,
¹⁷who brought out the chariots and horses,
the army and reinforcements together.
And they lie down! They cannot get up!
They have been extinguished, snuffed out like a wick.*

• The days of suffering, idolatry and exile may be forgotten

The old days of suffering and of idolatry and chastening and exile may be forgotten.

*¹⁸Forget the first things;
do not dwell on the past.
¹⁹See, I am about to do a new thing!
Now it will spring up. You cannot miss it.
I am making a way in the desert
and streams in the wasteland.
²⁰The wild animals honour me,
the jackals and the owls.’*

• God will provide abundantly

God will abundantly provide for his people just as he did before when they were wanderers in a wilderness.

*‘For I will provide water in the desert
and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen,
²¹the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.’*

• We are ‘Israel’

• We have been grafted into God’s Israel

• We can be sure of being rescued

We must apply these principles to ourselves. We too are ‘Israel’. God’s holy nation consisted not so much of everyone physically descended from Israel, but of those who shared Abraham’s faith. Not all are ‘Israel’ just because they descend from Israel¹. And we gentile believers (most of us) are grafted into God’s Israel. The promises belong to all who share Abraham’s faith in God’s promise of salvation. Perhaps we have been blind and deaf, but our wanderings do not make God to be unfaithful. We shall certainly be rescued, although the pathway may be tough for us if we do not co-operate with God. We can be sure

• We can testify to God's uniqueness, closeness and never-ending faithfulness

of it. We know in advance what no one else seems to know. We can testify to God's uniqueness, his closeness, his never-ending faithfulness. For us, too, he will make a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters. We too may forget the first things, and we need not dwell on the past. Sooner or later (sometimes it is later!) God rescues his people from their sins. It will spring up. You cannot miss it. He makes a way for us to come back to him – individually and in entire communities. It is because he re-created us when he saved us. We are his people, his chosen, the people he formed for himself that we may proclaim his praise.

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