

January 8, 2023

“God Promises to Hear”
and Restore
Lesson 2 of Unit

Isaiah 43:1-4,
43:10-12

Intro

Today’s study marks the first of three consecutive lessons from Isaiah. Our study has move up about 300 years from last week’s lesson about Solomon’s temple dedication prayer. The first half of Isaiah, chapters 1-39, deal heavily with God’s judgment on Judah, ending in chapter 39 with Isaiah’s prophecy that the Babylonians would conquer and carry away all of Judah’s treasures to Babylon, which they did.

The second half of Isaiah, from chapters 40-66, is sometimes called “The Book of Comfort”. Assyria, which was an arch-foe in the first half of the book, is no longer a threat; Babylon is the new concern. There is a greater emphasis in this section on promises of hope and a bright future for God’s people. One theme that Isaiah develops in this part is that of God’s people acting as God’s witnesses to the other nations on the earth. Think of witness here as “testimony” of God’s goodness to them, rather than “evangelism”, the way we can tend to think of the term “witnessing”.

Read Isaiah 43:1-4

1. vs. 1: The first two words, “But now”, indicate the change from judgments to promises
God tells the nation not to be afraid—He will continue to do great things for them
This verse lists four things that God did for Israel in the past:

Created them

Formed them (as a nation)

Israel was created and formed by God, not by the people themselves

Redeemed them—God delivered them from slavery in Egypt

Summoned them—God has called them to do something for Him

These four things show the depth of care and concern God has for Israel

2. vs. 2: Passing through the waters / rivers suggests dangerous situations

Both these references reference Israel’s deliverances

Through the waters of the Red Sea

Through the (Jordan) river when they entered the Promised Land

These crossings were types of dangers

God is saying the people are not to fear any dangers

In Is. 9:6, the coming Messiah is referred to as Immanuel—“God with us”

If God is with Israel, they have no reason to fear

The fires mentioned at the end refer to trials yet to come

The people need not fear these trials

God says the people “will not be burned” or “set ablaze”

They may be tested, but God will see them through it

This was the case for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

They were literally able to “walk through the fire”

3. vs. 3: God identifies Himself as the “LORD your God”

LORD is the personal name of God, the “I am who I am” He told Moses

This term connects Him to His nature—eternal and unchanging

The term God can refer to the Lord or to any false god

The context of the sentence lets the reader know which one is meant

Israel was called to worship the Lord God only

The people around them worshipped many gods

This emphasizes that God is not one among many, but the only God
God also calls Himself “the Holy One of Israel”

Holiness is certainly a set of characteristics: purity, sinlessness, etc

But beyond those, this term is making the claim of uniqueness

The Lord is unlike any other so-called god

For one thing, it is God who bound Himself to Israel by His own promises

It wasn't because of anything the people had done themselves

Because Holy God chose Israel, they are to be holy as well

Not just pure, but unique as well in the world they live in

This is true for Christians today

We are to serve God in holy and unique ways

The term “Savior” would have meant physical more than spiritual salvation here

God saved them from the Egyptians because He love them

Besides Egypt, Cush and Seba are mentioned

Cush is south of Egypt

Seba is near Ethiopia

The extent of God's protection and love are shown in this

He didn't just save/protect them from Egypt

He did the same for them with other areas/peoples

4. vs. 4: God calls Israel “precious and honored in my sight”

They enjoy this position because God chose them, not because of anything they did

These terms also connect to the idea of holiness

Because God chose them, they are to be holy before Him

Christians today see this story in their relationship with Christ

We were called by a Holy Savior

We did nothing to deserve being called

We are seen as precious and honored in His sight

We are to live/walk in holiness with Him and before Him

Read Isaiah 43:10-12

5. vs. 10: God calls Israel his “witnesses”

The job of a witness is to verify events or words of another

God is calling Israel to be witnesses to the nations

About who He is, and about what He has done

He delivered them from Egypt, and has sustained them lovingly since

Israel is also called “my servant whom I have chosen”
By choosing and caring for them, they have the role now of serving God
They serve him by witnessing to the nations about God’s works
In OT times, 2 or 3 witnesses were required to convict someone of a crime
Here, God has a whole nation of witnesses about He has done

6. vs. 11: God reminds Israel again that He is unique, unlike all other “gods”
“apart from Me there is no savior”
Israel then, like people today, can follow other “gods” and serve them
Israel did this by aligning themselves with other nations for protection
God is supposed to be their “rock and ... salvation”
They at times chose to rely on other means to secure their safety

7. vs. 12: God here establishes the criteria that make the people His witnesses
“I have revealed and saved and proclaimed...”
First, God revealed Himself to the people so they could know Him
Then He saved them from Egypt and from challenging situations in the Wilderness
Ever since then, He has proclaimed to them who He is
God’s works have been seen by other nations as well
All this shows that the people were meant to be witnesses for God to the nations
Everything they have seen and learned is available to share

Application: The message from today’s lesson is clear for us. God has revealed Himself to us, saved us, and proclaimed who He is. He has called us to be His witnesses. We might think of this individually, and that is one good and fair way to see it. Each of us who claim to be His followers are called to share what He has done for us, to be His witnesses. But a further idea is that the church itself is a major witness to the world around us, the “other nations”. How does our presence in this community tell the truths about who God is and what He has done?

Prayer: Father God, thank You for how You have revealed Yourself throughout history, and to each one of us Your followers. Help us to gladly take on the role of servant witnesses, who both live the life you’ve given us, and proclaim Your goodness and Your works to those who don’t know You yet. In Jesus’ name, Amen.