

God's Promise of Restoration for Israel

Isaiah 43

Isaiah 43:1-4 - *"But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. ³ For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place. ⁴ Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored, and I have loved you. Therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life."*

Background Notes

In Isaiah 42, we saw the great contrast between the coming Messiah, the perfect Servant of the Lord, and the nation of Israel, the imperfect servant of the Lord. Chapter 43 reveals that the Lord in His grace will deliver Israel in the future, in spite of Israel's failure as the servant of the Lord.

And the prophecy was not about the return of the Jewish people from their captivity in Babylon - it is also about their future return to the Land from around the world. They will not only return "from the ends of the earth" to the Land of Israel, but they will return to the Lord in a wonderful spiritual restoration.

God has not rejected His people Israel. This is very clearly stated in Romans 11. Yes, they have been "set aside" - but only **temporarily** set aside. Meanwhile the Church is being formed, and the blessing of the Lord is extended to the Gentiles. The Gentiles have now been brought into a place of God's favor. This is all part of God's program.

But the present time period (the "Church Age") is not the end of God's program. The descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will once again be brought into the place of blessing when they turn to the Lord. Many Jewish people will recognize and receive Jesus as their true Messiah in the future. Read Romans 11 in this connection.

Doctrinal Points

1. God has preserved His people, Israel, throughout their captivity and scattering.

God's sovereign grace and tender care for His people was emphasized in Isaiah 43:1, where He referred to the nation as both "Jacob" and "Israel." Jacob (meaning "deceiver") became Israel (meaning "a prince with God") because of God's

caring discipline and sovereign grace. The Lord redeemed His people out of Egypt as “His own people” (v1). He brought them through the waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan River, and He protected from the scorching heat of the wilderness.

God preserved His people - and He would continue to preserve His people Israel from total destruction through all their various trials: *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you”* (v2). Think of how Daniel’s three godly friends were preserved in the fiery furnace. That event occurred about 100 years after Isaiah wrote this prophecy.

God loved and cared for His people so much that His sovereign plans were to give Egypt and Ethiopia and part of Arabia over to the coming Persian Empire because Cyrus, the Persian emperor, would permit the Jewish people to return from their Babylonian captivity.

Isaiah 43:5-7- *“Fear not, for I am with you. I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west. ⁶ I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not keep them back!’ Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth. ⁷ Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory. I have formed him, yes, I have made him.”*

In verses 5-7, it is obvious that the predicted future return of God’s people to the Land of Israel includes more than just the return from their Babylonian captivity. In the future, the Jewish people will return (as they’re doing today) from their worldwide scattering – from the east, and west, and north, and south. The Jewish people did not return from the west when they returned from Babylon, but they are returning from the west today.

In verses 8-13, all nations were once again assembled in God’s courtroom. The nation of Israel is called as God’s witness even though they were, and continue to be to the present day, spiritually blind and deaf. Verse 8: *“Bring out the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears.”* The nations were challenged in God’s court to present evidence that they and their gods had been able to predict events that had happened in the past before they took place. Obviously they could not present evidence of predicting the future.

But the Lord can predict the future - because He is the one true God. So what evidence did God bring into His courtroom to prove that He holds the future and controls all events in the past, present, and future? The answer is **Israel!** Look at Israel! The nation of Israel was - and is - God’s witness and evidence that He is sovereign over all.

Isaiah 43:10-13 - *“You are My witnesses,” says the Lord, “and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.*

¹¹ I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. ¹² I have declared and saved; I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you. Therefore you are My witnesses,” says the Lord, “that I am God. ¹³ Indeed before the day was, I am He; and there is no one who can deliver out of My hand. I work, and who will reverse it?”

The miraculous preservation of the Jewish people down through history is irrefutable proof that they are a unique and special people – just as God declared! God has preserved His people, Israel, throughout their captivity and scattering.

2. God has preserved His people, Israel, in spite of their callousness and sin.

Isaiah 43:14- 21 - *“Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “For your sake I will send to Babylon, and bring them all down as fugitives— the Chaldeans, who rejoice in their ships. ¹⁵ I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.” ¹⁶ Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty waters, ¹⁷ who brings forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power. (They shall lie down together, they shall not rise; they are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick).*

¹⁸ “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ²⁰ The beast of the field will honor Me, the jackals and the ostriches, because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, to give drink to My people, My chosen. ²¹ This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise!”

In verse 14 God declared that He would preserve His people throughout the Babylonian captivity. The Babylonians, or Chaldeans, would flee by boat down the Euphrates River when the Medes and the Persians overran and conquered the great city of Babylon.

God reminded His people Israel that it was He who created them as a nation. It was He who miraculously redeemed them out of Egypt, and preserved them when the Egyptian army was eliminated (v15-17). But In verses 18-19 God told Israel not to live in the past. Don't think that God's wonders were only in the past, or that His intervention was over for Israel. No! God was going to do “a new thing” for His people!

The “new thing” was more than the return of the Jewish people to their homeland from the Babylonian captivity. These verses look ahead, even beyond the present time, to the Lord's earthly kingdom in the future when He returns (v19-21).

That will be the time when “the wolf will lie down with the lamb” (Isaiah 11:6) and “the desert will blossom as the rose” (Isaiah 35:2). That will be the time of our Lord's kingdom here on this earth.

Isaiah 43:22-24 - *“But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; and you have been weary of Me, O Israel. ²³ You have not brought Me the sheep for your burnt offerings, nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with grain offerings, nor wearied you with incense. ²⁴ You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities.*

Verses 22-24 went back in time to Isaiah's day. Although the nation of Israel had these great promises for the future, the people were not walking with the Lord in Isaiah's day. "Sweet cane" (v24) was an ingredient for the anointing oil for consecration under the Law.

Isaiah 43:25-28 - *"I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. ²⁶ Put Me in remembrance; let us contend together. State your case, that you may be acquitted. ²⁷ Your first father sinned, and your mediators have transgressed against Me. ²⁸ Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse and Israel to reproaches.*

In verses 25-28, the Lord guaranteed Israel that in the future, for His own sake, He would graciously forgive them and would no longer remember their sins. He promised this, in spite of the fact that they had sinned against Him from the beginning - and they could not present any evidence to the contrary. And that is why God would have to discipline Israel with disgrace and destruction and scorn in the coming conquest of Babylon, and the resulting exile to that pagan land. *"Therefore I will profane the princes of the sanctuary; I will give Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches" (v28).*

But in spite of all this, God promised that the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be preserved as a people and as a nation. And He has kept that promise! God has preserved His people, Israel, in spite of their callousness and sin.

Practical Application

You can never say, "It's too great a burden!"

We can never say it's too great a burden to live the Christian life! Notice that God told His people, *"I have not burdened you with grain offerings or wearied you with demands for incense" (v23).* In other words, God was not excessive or burdensome in His demands on His people.

This was true for God's people in Isaiah's day, and it is still true for God's people today. God doesn't crack the whip. He doesn't create heavy burdens or make us stagger under a heavy load throughout the Christian life. In fact, the Lord Jesus said, *"My yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).*

The pathway of life may sometimes be hard and difficult. Serving the Lord is labor, and all kinds of persecutions may confront us.

But we can never say that the Christian life is "too great a burden"!