

Isaiah 41:1-13

"The Comfort Of Our Creator"

Isaiah 41 is all about the *comfort* of our Creator. If we take a moment to "zoom out", we remind ourselves that Isaiah is speaking (in this section) to future generations of God's people. Babylonians are going to come & destroy their temple, carry them off into exile & the nation of Judah will languish there for some 70 yrs.

But it hasn't happened yet. In fact, it would be another 100 yrs or so before it took place. Yet God (in His mercy) is doling out *promises* of restoration & rejuvenation before the *problems* ever took place! 🟩 It's just one of the many ways that God comforts us! (By letting us know that rough times will come into our lives, but He's well aware of it, hasn't been caught off guard by it, & has plans & promises for our peace even in the very midst of it). God gives us *promises* prior to our *problems*!

& I for one am so glad that He does... Because when the problems are raining down, it can be easy to begin to think that perhaps God has somehow lost sight of you, or maybe He just doesn't *care* about you. Perish the thought. God *loves* you & He gives certain assurances to you (promises to you) before the problems ever present themselves. *

Vs 1-4

I want to dive right in here & get this piece of information in your hands so that we can move along unencumbered by our curiosity. There's a little speculation regarding who exactly God is referencing in this passage when He speaks of "raising one up" from the east, being called in righteousness to His feet. The one whom He gave the nations & made rule over kings.

Some say this is a reference to Abraham. & Certainly, all of this is *applicable* to Abraham. The *reason* some say this is because in our passage, God speaks of *former* things & *latter* things (like bookends). Things that have happened *historically* & things that will happen yet *prophetically* (obviously implying that He's also over all things in between) & if He's over the affairs of history (from the 1st to the last) then He *exclusively* has the right to judge humanity. So, they see the fact of God raising up Abraham & giving him such tremendous favor as one of the bookends in view here.

Others point to a particular king named Cyrus. & Honestly, these truths could apply equally to him. & We'll note that God names *Abraham* in this Ch. He certainly *alludes* to Cyrus later in this Ch (if He's not here) & in a few Ch's from now, He'll *call* Cyrus by name. The interesting thing is that He calls Cyrus by name about 150 yrs before he's even born!

All that to say, some see *Abraham* as one bookend regarding “former things” & Cyrus as a reference to “latter things” (the other bookend as an example of things to come).

Others say, “No, this is all speaking of Cyrus whom God raised up to free the Jews from Babylonian captivity to return to rebuild their temple & their city.” & For some of you, this may be of no interest whatsoever. Others may want to do a deep dive & draw your own conclusion... I just want to set those options (& there are a couple of others that people wonder about, but those are the main 2) on the table for you so you can have a bit of intelligence to work with when you’re considering this passage.

However, truth be told, since God doesn’t say specifically, we’re left to a bit of conjecture. Both perspectives are a wonderful, accurate application/interpretation of this passage & neither have any bearing on your salvation. So, I’m ok whichever way you want to lean.

What *I* want you to pick up on out of this passage is Who it is who’s commanding the courtroom. Who it is who calls the nations, the peoples, the tribes & tongues of the world (the “coastlands”, we might understand it, “far reaches of the earth”) into account, into judgment? Who is in control here? It’s not the foreign gods/idols of the nations. (That’s the context we’re working with from the previous Ch). It’s the Living God, the King of Jacob, the true God & the only God w/whom we have to do.

* Ladies and Gentlemen: the day is coming when the world will stand before the Sovereign God (Creator of heaven & earth) & be judged according to their works!

As for me, I have no desire to be judged according to *my* works, I prefer to put my trust in the work of J.C. on my behalf & I would encourage you to do the same! Judgment is coming! But grace is available. *Now* is the time to turn to J.C. *Today*, if you’ll hear His voice, don’t harden your heart. Don’t reject Him, believe upon Him, accept Him & be saved.

& This is the urgency of the gospel. Because we simply have no guarantees of when that Day will come! Or for that matter, when *our* day will come. I could have a heart attack today! You could be in a fatal car wreck on your way home. (It’s not a scare tactic, it’s simply the truth)! But people tend to think they have time, & that mentality will serve as a snare to many of them. Jesus said that like this, *“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”*¹*

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Lk 21:34–36]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Look back at **Vs 1**, (read). What a solemn moment... God calls the nations to keep silence as they come together for judgment. Think of when you're in a courtroom. People may be chatting away, but when the judge enters, you hear "all rise" & a respectful silence ensues. If that be true in a human court, how much more in the courtroom of the Living God?

"& Let the people renew their strength..." If you're going to contest w/God, you better be prepared. – Having just come out of Vs 31 of Ch 40, we learned that the people of God have a limitless strength to draw from as they wait upon the Lord. Your strength in Christ is renewed day by day as you serve Him, wait *on* Him as you serve *others* & wait *on others*. Remember Jesus said that what you do to the least of these "My brethren" you do unto Me. In other words, when we serve the Body of Christ, (your brothers & sisters in Christ) Jesus takes that personally. As you wait on *them*, He considers it service to *Him*! So, day by day He will renew, refresh, recharge you.

But if you *don't* know the Lord, you really don't have a source to draw from... So, when He says here, "Let the people renew their strength" we almost pick up on a sense of *irony*. "Do what you can, get ready to stand before Me!" He says, "I'm going to give you a place, a platform to speak. Gather your thoughts, come justify your idolatry, the fact that you worship some other (g)od besides Me."

& In Vs 2-4, God begins reasoning. Asking questions as to who it is who has true authority over the affairs of humanity. Are those idols the ones who author the events of human history? Are *they* the ones who've called generations from the beginning?

Now, I don't want you to get lost here. Or tune out because it seems as though we're speaking of something that doesn't really touch where you're at today. The interpretation of this passage certainly belongs to Israel. But the application is as relevant today as it was the day Isaiah wrote it.

Because here's where this ride is ultimately driving; * Is there a point, a direction *to* or course set *for* human history? Is it driving anywhere specifically? Is there *meaning* to it? Some kind of objective end? Or is it just some random, completely meaningless, haphazard combination of undirected/chance events?

Is there a God in heaven who directs the course of human events, always moving us to a final resolution, a once for all fulfillment? Or is humanity simply fated to be on an endless "rinse & repeat" cycle of random happenings? It's an important question! Because our answer will impact/influence practically every nuance (if not every nuance) of our lives!

Vs 4

What we have here is God, declaring from Heaven. “You’re not here by random chance. Humanity is not ill-fated to rinse & repeat ad infinitum & we’ll see what becomes of it!” He says, “I’ve called out generations from the beginning!” In the book of Acts, Paul the apostle put it this way, *“He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,”* (why? Why were you born when you were, where you were?) *so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being,”*² That’s the love of God for you!

God loves you so much that He’s placed you in the time/place in human history most advantageous for you to seek after Him, believe *upon* Him & be saved *by* Him... Isn’t that amazing? He’s called out generations from the beginning... *

“I, the Lord, am the first; & w/the last I am He.” He’s the One who lifts up kings, puts down nations. He’s the 1st & the last. The “bookend” before & after the “epic saga” of human history. He’s facilitated the whole story from beginning to end & everything in between... *Your life is not given over to blind fate, or random chance w/no resolution. God loves you. He sent Christ to rescue you from the penalty of your sin. Jesus came to seek & to save that which was lost. & We’re here today that we might hear from Him, perhaps be saved by Him, or grow closer to Him being made more like Him...*

* Little side observation for you here in Vs 4. God takes the title, “The 1st & the Last.” “Beginning & the End” (if you will). Do you remember in the book of Rev Ch 1 when John saw Jesus, glorified in heaven? There He was, His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, (John says). His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; (powerful, overwhelming & strong). *Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.* – John says, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though I were dead... & understandably so, what an *awesome* sight! But we read that Jesus laid His right hand upon him & said to him, *“Do not be afraid; (don’t miss this) I am the First and the Last.”*³ That’s in the 1st Ch of the book. In the *last* Ch Jesus says *this, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”*⁴

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ac 17:26–28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Re 1:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Re 22:13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now, I don't mean to confuse you here but if *God* says that *He's* the 1st & the Last. & Jesus says that *He's* the 1st & the last (& there can only be 1 first & 1 last...) How do we solve that riddle? ☺ Jesus *must* be God... *

Vs 5-7

Are you following the flow here? Isaiah says that when the nations were confronted by the God of all power, all authority & sovereignty they *feared*... That's not a bad thing, that's a good thing! "Everyone helped his neighbor & said to his brother, 'Be of good courage!'" So far so good!

But it's *how* they encouraged one another, the *direction* in which they strengthened one another that sort of *shocks* us, we're almost left *stunned* as we read it... "The craftsman encouraged the goldsmith, He who smooths w/the hammer inspired him who strikes the anvil, saying, 'Let's turn from these worthless idols, turn to the Living God & be saved!'" **Is that what your bible says? No! They doubled down on their idolatry! Rather than allowing their fear to humble them that they might surrender before God, they turned away from God w/all the more tenacity, resolve & determination!**

* Ladies and Gentlemen: I want you to see & understand what it is that we (as humanity) inherited in Adam. It was *not* a desire to be *with* God! It was a desire to run *away* from God! Recall the scene in your mind's eye... What happened after Adam partook of the fruit of the knowledge of good & evil? Did he run to God in repentance, confessing his sin & begging for forgiveness? No! He ran from God, tried to hide from God in all his sinful shame!

Now. It's true that in the heart of every individual there is what we refer to as a "God shaped void" a vacuum that is always pulling things toward it, trying to be filled. & We recognize that as a "homing device" of sorts. Something that is seeking to lead us *to* the Lord. To seek *after* the Lord that we might *find* the Lord. But family, that's not something that *Adam* gave you. Read Ecc 3:11, it's something that *God* gave you. He placed eternity into the heart of every man. An intrinsic understanding that there must be more than what this life has to offer... That's not there because of *Adam*, it's there by the love/grace of *God*! But even *still*, people will be shown the truth of who God is, what God has done, reject Him & choose to follow a god of their own making (Paul speaks to this in Romans 1:18-25) *

Vs 8-9

The comparison/contrast. "But *you*, Israel are My servant." Unlike the God-rejecting, idol-making people of distant lands, Israel (which means "governed by God") is the servant of the Lord.

Intrinsic w/in that statement, “servant of the Lord” is a right understanding of role & relationship. God is the One who is in control, He is the Master, the One who leads, directs, protects & corrects. Israel is the one who serves, follows & obeys.

& Notice how God immediately puts in the system of “checks & balances”. “Israel My servant”, but lest there be an air of pride, “We’re not some pagan people of a foreign land, we’re governed by *God*.” He adds, “Jacob whom I have chosen.” I mentioned it last week, but the name Jacob literally means, “heel catcher”, “one who trips up”, “deceiver”. The idea here is that God didn’t choose them because *they* were so great. But because *He* is so great. They would be a beacon of His grace to the nations!

In the book of Deuteronomy we read, *“The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;”*⁵ God wasn’t drawn to you because you were this fierce, unrivaled nation. You were a spec, nothing, not really even a people at all! – *But in this God is glorified. He loves putting Himself in the least likely situation so that when He prevails, He alone gets the glory.* In the N.T. we read it like this, *“For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”*⁶ We don’t choose Him, He chooses us! Therefore, let him who glories, glory in the Lord!

He goes back even farther. Who did Jacob & *his* sons come from? They descended from Abraham (whom God calls) “My friend.” Abraham was the friend of God; therefore, his descendants had a special place before God as well. Do right relationships matter? You bet they do!

& I want to encourage you today as well. Because all the things that were true of Israel here in Vs 8-9 are true of you as well, in Christ. You are God’s servant, He has chosen you (not because you’re so great, but because He’s so great). You are the friend of God. Not because of your relationship to/Abraham, but because of your relationship w/J.C. (Jn 15:14-15).

Vs 10-13

If Vs 10 isn’t underlined in your Bible, make it so! “Fear not, for I am with you.”

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Dt 7:7–Jdg 3:2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Co 1:26–29]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's both a command & a promise, isn't it? The command? "Fear not." – * I don't know that I would say categorically, but I would say that generally, things like fear, worry & anxiety (dismay) are sin. God tells us plainly, "Fear not", "Be not dismayed".

But I love the fact that He tells us not only *what* we're not to do, He tells us *why* we're not to do it. He says, "For I am with you, I am your God, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you w/My righteous right hand." So often, we're prone to fear (or discouragement) when we feel like we're alone in a situation. God says, "You're never alone, I'll never leave you, I'll never forsake you. & Not only am I *with you*, I will help (support) you, I'll add strength (courage, boldness, assurance) *to you*, I'll hold you up w/My righteous right hand..." What a precious promise from the word of God. If God is for us... (Rom 8:31) who can be against us? **Close**

Worry, fear, anxiety... These things lay hold of us when we forget how powerful, how great, how glorious our God is. *

Back in Vs 7 He says, "Idols have to be fastened w/pegs, *you* have to help *them* so they won't fall, *you* have to hold *them* up. But God says, "Listen, I'll help *you*, I'll hold *you* up w/My righteous right hand." This is the comfort of our Creator. & Now you see the terrible nature of our fear & unbelief. Those things say to God, "I don't believe that *You are w/me*. I'm not sure that *you are Almighty*. I'm not convinced that *You truly do love me*."

But as the old Hymn goes, "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know who holds the future..." As we like to say, I may not know what the future holds, but I know Who holds the future. No need to fear.

& We'll pick up on these thoughts next time. But for now I just want to leave you w/the assurance of God's love, His help, His hope, His healing... He is w/you, He will never leave nor forsake you, & He will uphold you in times of trouble w/His righteous right hand...

Prayer Points:

God we thank You that You are the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation. We honor You today. We thank You for the precious promises of Your word. That are w/us, will never leave nor forsake us, that You will strengthen & help us. God, for reasons that lie w/in Yourself You have chosen us, we are Your servants, thank You for calling us Your friends, Your children... We humble our hearts before You & give You praise...

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. It's by grace that we're saved through faith & that not of ourselves, it's the gift of God. From the alpha to the omega, to God alone be the glory. Believe on the Lord J.C. & be saved.