

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #57

Isaiah 41:1-29

I don't listen too much to the political wrangling that takes place day in and day out on TV and radio. I try to stay informed on what is happening in the world, but the truth is, I know how it will all end and I know where this is all headed. All of the nations of the world are heading toward a judgment of God that will leave them and all of their political leaders standing before God with their mouths shut, their heads bowed and their knees shaking. Jesus Christ said that when He comes in all of His glory, "all the tribes of the earth will mourn" (Matthew 24:30). That is what God wants His people to know and He wants them comforted by this knowledge. Never is that more evident than when you come to **Isaiah 41**. What Isaiah says is this:

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE COMFORTED BY KNOWING THAT HE IS IN SOVEREIGN CHARGE OF ALL OF THE POWERS AND POLITICAL LEADERS OF THE WORLD AND HE WILL EVENTUALLY BLESS HIS PEOPLE AND DESTROY THOSE WHO WERE AGAINST HIM AND HIS PEOPLE.

H. A. Ironside said, to know God and to confide in God is to be "invincible" (*Isaiah*, P. 246).

In this chapter there are three main sovereign realizations that God wants His people to have:

SOVEREIGN REALIZATION #1 – God sovereignly confronts the nations. **41:1-7**

The noun "coastlands" or as in some translations "islands" is one that refers to distant . places which are far away from Israel's Promised Land. God starts addressing these nations and basically says in **verse 1**, "Shut your mouths and listen to Me." **The basic message is it is now time for all the nations to face God.** It is time for a face-to-face judgment by God. What God would show is that these nations did not know God, they did not know His Word, and God was going to wipe them out. There is a big showdown coming and God isn't going to lose; the world will lose.

In **verse 2**, God says He brings one from the east and **verse 25** says He brings one from the north. Persia was to the east of the Promised Land and many of its conquests of Israel came from the north. Some say that both references are to Cyrus, which means God is saying I will show how sovereign I am by bringing a specific leader into this land. In fact, later in this book He will name Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

However, it is also possible that **verse 2** is a reference to Jesus Christ and to the time when He will come back as righteous judge to level the nations and **verse 25** is a reference to Cyrus.

The point of all of this is that God will one day sovereignly carry out His righteous program on earth and He will destroy the nations. **God is the One who actually is in charge of all political leaders at all times and He does what He wants with them and when He is done with them, He blows them away like chaff.**

God is able to sovereignly bring onto the stage of the world some leader who is nothing more than playing a part in the program of God. God is a sovereign and majestic God who alone can do these things.

God confronts all the nations of the world with news of His pending judgment. Isaiah confronts the nations that they could make all the alliances they want, and they could invent all of the idols they want, and nothing they try will ever be able stop the judgment of God (41:5-7).

When God calls the nations to appear before Him it is not to negotiate with them; He is calling them before Him to confront them with the truth that His ferocious judgment has arrived and He is going to blow them away like dust.

Cyrus probably thought he was doing whatever he wanted to do, but God says I am the One who was directing all the events.

SOVEREIGN REALIZATION #2 – God sovereignly comforts Israel. 41:8-20

God is a powerful God, but He is also a personal God. You will notice in **verse 10**, that God tells His people they have nothing to fear because He is with them. This is amazing grace because even though Israel had rebelled against God, He was still on their side and they had nothing to fear. This theme of not being afraid is repeated at least seven times in the next four chapters (41:10, 13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8). Israel has nothing to fear for several reasons:

Reason #1 - God has chosen Israel as His nation. 41:8-9

It is true that Israel has failed God, but God chose her and that decision started when He chose Abraham. The fact that God chose Israel is a key theme of the remainder of the book of Isaiah (41:8-9; 42:1; 43:10, 20; 44:1-2; 45:4; 49:7; 65:9, 15, 22). Being the chosen of God, Isaiah uses two pronouns “My” in **verse 8** to say something very comforting to Israel: you are “My servant and you are My friend.” When God uses that personal pronoun “My” concerning a nation or individual, it means it is His possession and His property.

Reason #2 - God is with Israel. 41:10a

The Hebrew preposition “with” is one that expresses nearness (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 636). Even though God’s people may not sense this, they can know this; God is always near His people. God remains Israel’s God no matter how bad she has drifted from Him and His Word.

Reason #3 - God will strengthen, help and uphold Israel. 41:10b

What amazing grace is seen in this verse. Almighty God promises to do some wonderful things for His people. He will strengthen them, help them, and uphold them. Truth is, the fact of Israel’s survival and existence is national proof of this point even today.

Reason #4 - God will eliminate all of Israel's enemies. **41:11-12**

God will never protect or bless any nation that opposes Israel. In fact, He will destroy them.

Reason #5 - God is Israel's LORD God and Redeemer. **41:13-14**

Israel may be small like a worm and not look like anything impressive, but God says I will help you and redeem you. In fact, the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is the Holy One of Israel. This title "Redeemer" is used some thirteen times in these final chapters of Isaiah (**41:14**; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16) and in five of these times the title "the Holy One of Israel" is used (**41:14**; 43:14; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5). The point of this repetition is that Jesus Christ is the God/Redeemer and He is of Israel. Some people do not like the Jews, but they had better realize that there is only one Redeemer and He is Jewish.

The specific Hebrew word "redeemer" is a specific word that carries with it the idea of redeeming something by buying it back (*Ibid.*, p. 151). The redemptive work of Jesus Christ is what makes it possible for God to take back a rebellious Israel, and it is the same work that enables God to have a relationship with sinful people like us.

Reason #6 - God will completely transform Israel. **41:15-16**

Israel will one day be viewed as the special nation of God and the other nations will be blown away like chaff. Note the end of **verse 16**; this will all happen when Israel rejoices and realizes the glory of God is found in Jesus Christ.

Reason #7 - God will physically provide for Israel. **41:17-18**

Water in the Middle East is scarce today, but when these events occur, there will never be any thirst again. God knows what His people need to survive and He has promised to always see to it that His people have enough to survive.

In fact, Jesus Christ specifically said in the context of God caring and providing for His people, that their primary focus should be on seeking the righteous things of God and "all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:25-33).

Reason #8 - God will physically bless the land of Israel. **41:19-20**

You cannot possibly read the Bible without seeing that God has promised to do some amazing physical things in the land of Israel that will leave the world in awe of what God has done.

Carefully observe two things from **verse 19**: 1) God is the One who will plant, put and place these trees in the Promised Land; 2) There are seven trees specifically named (cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, juniper, box tree and cypress). This number seven is not coincidental because this is the Biblical number of completion.

What God is saying here is that I am going to completely bless the land of Israel. The picture here is that of the Promised Land becoming like a wonderful garden. The land of Israel will be plush and productive. It will feature plenty of water and beautiful trees. Any who see this land will realize the hand of God is on it.

Truth is, what Israel's land is right now is exactly the same condition as many believers and many churches are right now. They are barren, unproductive and dry. The reason is because they are not letting God plant the things into their lives that He wants to plant.

People should be able to look at our lives right now and see the glory of God

SOVEREIGN REALIZATION #3 – God controls the future. **41:21-29**

This final section presents the nations in the courtroom of God. God calls the idolatrous nations to appear before Him to present their case.

Can you imagine someone daring to step in front of the Great and Glorious God and presenting their case. Just imagine a Charles Darwin-type standing before the Living God and telling Him that he tried to convince the world that we evolved from some “primordial protoplasm” that eventually formed some “anthropoid ape.” Can you imagine some so-called “scientist” who stands before Almighty God and says he tried to convince the world that it came into existence by a “Big Bang.” Can you imagine some homosexual standing before God and saying he didn't really choose this lifestyle; he was born a homosexual. God will have a good laugh and He will have the last laugh. God says in **verse 21**, give Me your strong arguments about what you believe contrary to My Word.

In fact, God asks them if the gods they trusted in could help them in any way. He challenges any of them to predict the future (**verse 22**). **The point of this is to show how worthless the nations are who know nothing about God.**

In fact, in **verse 24** God says **your works mean nothing and you mean nothing**. Nations choose their abominations. They make their choices one right after the other rather than to yield to the grace of God. The only way to a right relationship with God is by turning to Him and trusting in Him. Their works mean nothing.

I don't care what a politician or professor accomplishes. I do not care what a nation thinks; apart from the Word of God, and apart from a relationship with God, it means nothing.

In **verse 25** God says I am the One who can tell you the future. I am the One who can raise one to power. God says I am God and I know the end from the beginning (**verse 26a**).

The tragedy was that there was no one who knew, declared and proclaimed the Word of God or the truth about God (**verse 26b**). There was no one to proclaim the good news of God (**verse 27**) and there was no one who could give any true counsel (**verse 28**). They are all false (**verse 29**). There is only one way to be right with God and that is by faith, not works.

God's assessment of the arrogant nations is that your works mean nothing to Me (**verse 24**) and you are all liars (**verse 29**).