

Isaiah 42:18–43:21

Saved by the LORD to Testify to the LORD as the Only Savior

**Wednesday, February 14, 2024 • Read Isaiah 42:18–43:21**

*Questions from the Scripture text: What problem do the nations have in v18? But who also has that problem in v19–20? What is YHWH pleased to exalt in v21? Who are not exalted in v22? How does the Lord call the nations' attention to this in v23? Who punished Israel, so that they could not help the nations (v24–25)? What had Israel done with the Lord's Word (v24d–e) and the Lord's discipline (v25d–f)? What solution is there for this helpless servant (43:1)? Who had created and formed them (v1a–b)? Why shouldn't they fear—what else has He done (v1c)? How do v1d–e communicate the intimate/personal nature of this redemption? Through what will the Lord accompany and protect them (v2)? Why, Who is God to them (v3a–b)? And what has God done for them (v3c–d)? Why did He do this (v4)? How is this a solution to their punishment (v5–6)? For which Israelites, specifically, will He do this (v7)? In light of this salvation for Israel, what does the Lord now say to do to the nations (v8–9)? What are they unable to tell? Who alone can tell it (v10a–d, 12d–e)? Why only they—what other god is there (v10e–f)? What other deliverer (v11, 13)? What other evangelist (v12a–b)? How will this become a solution for the exile (v14–15)? When has He exerted power like this before (v16–17)? What will the past redemption be matched by (v18–20)? With what future result (v21)?*

**Who can bring salvation to the nations?** Isaiah 42:18–43:21 prepares us for the first serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these twenty-seven verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **only the God Who saves Israel can bring salvation also to the nations.**

**A spiritual pandemic.** The blind and deaf in v18 are in the plural, referring to the other nations that are as ignorant as their gods (cf. 41:21–23, 42:17). But Israel, God's servant (not to be confused with the future Servant of 42:1ff), is also blind (v19). They had God's Word and works (v20), but sinned against Him and disobeyed (v24). So, the Lord has honored His law (v21) and punished Israel for breaking it (v22, 24–25). Now the nations are summoned to pay attention (v24) to how it is not Israel who can save them but only Israel's God.

**A divine cure.** God formed Israel out of redemption, when He brought them out of Egypt (43:1), and His future work will be similar. There are those elect ones whom He calls by His Name (v7), and they are the object of His companionship and protection (v2). Even when the nation as a whole is destroyed and exiled, the Lord never loses track of them, and gathers them to Himself in adopting love (v3–6). As we hear Him say this, we mustn't forget that this is an object lesson for the nations. For indeed, as we have been learning in Romans, God has elect among all the nations. And, His work in all of history is focused not upon the stumbling of those who are perishing but upon the riches of His mercy toward His elect, whom He is saving (cf. Rom 11:11).

So, once again, the Lord summons the blind and deaf nations (v8) and asks them if they can declare good, true news of salvation (v9). Of course, they cannot. But Israel, who do have the word and redeeming works of YHWH, are witnesses of that good news of salvation (v10a–d, 12. He is Alpha and Omega (v10e–f; cf. 41:4, Rev 1:8, 1:17, 22:13). He is the only Savior (v11).

**The evangelistic duty of the healed.** It turns out that the reason that the Lord had saved Israel in the manner that He had when He brought them out of Egypt (v16–20, n.b. through the sea, path in the wilderness, water in the desert, protection from beasts) was that He had future work to do that would be similar (v14–15).

So long as the Lord's redemption is not yet completed, we ought not to pine for past days of past redemptive work (v18) but look forward to the new days of God's ongoing, redeeming work (v19). Ultimately, the Lord is redeeming for Himself a people who will worship Him (v21). That is the story of all human history. That is your story, dear believer.

The world cannot tell themselves the good news of the one, true God, Who saves a people for Himself and His praise. You, who know Him, who have been saved by His might and His mercy—you are His witnesses. There is no other god, no other salvation. If the church is blind and deaf to the glory and gospel of God, then who will tell the nations?

Praise be to God that He makes Himself the solution to her blindness and deafness. Even now, as we study this portion of Isaiah, may His Spirit renew our vision and our hearing to know Him Who saved us for Himself. And, may He loosen our tongues to speak His praise in worship to Him and in witness to the world!

**Whom do you know that does not know where healing and salvation come from? But where do your own healing and salvation come from? So, who can tell those whom you know? What opportunities do you have to do so? Why should we expect great things for the future?**

*Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for our hard-heartedness to be forgetful of Your salvation. When we live in hopelessness or disobedience, we act as blind and deaf as the lost world. But You have mercifully and mightily redeemed us. Forgive us for how we have failed to witness about You to the world and to worship You for Your glory and Your gospel. And restore us to such witness and worship, we ask, through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP98 "O Sing a New Song" or TPH438 "I Love to Tell the Story"**

**(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))**

Isaiah 42, verse 18, through 43 verse 21. These are God's words. Hear you deaf and look, you blind that you may see. Who is blind but my servant or deaf as my messenger, whom I send who is blind as he who is perfect and blind as Yahweh's servant seeing many things, but you do not observe opening the ears, but he does not hear.

Y'all play is well, pleased for his, righteousness's sake. He will exalt the law and make it honorable But this is a people robbed and plundered, all of them are snared in holes and they are hidden in prison houses. They are for prey and no one delivers for plunder. No one says restore.

Who among you will give ear to this who will listen and hear for the time to come, who gave Jacob for plunder and Israel to the robbers. Was it not Yahweh? He against whom we have sinned. For they would not walk in his ways nor were they obedient to his law.

Therefore, he has poured on him, the fury of his anger and the strength of battle has set him on fire all around yet. He did not know and it burned him. He did not take it to heart. But now thus says, Yahweh who created you, oh, 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. 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 burnt. Nor shall the Flames Scorch.

You For I am Yahweh, your God the Holy One of Israel, your savior. I gave Egypt for your Ransom Ethiopia and siba in your place 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 fear.

Not for I am with you. Will bring your descendants from the East and gather you from the West. 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 end of the Earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I have created for my glory, I have formed him, yes, I have made him Bring out the blind, people who have eyes and the deaf who have ears.

Let all the nations be gathered together and let all the people be assembled who among them can declare this and show us former things. Let them bring out their

Witnesses, that they may be justified or let them hear and say it is truth. You are my Witnesses as Yahweh 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.

I even I am Yahweh and besides me, there is no savior. I have declared and saved. I have proclaimed. And there was no foreign God among you therefore you are my Witnesses as Yahweh that I am God. 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? Thus says Yahweh 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 shifts. I am Yahweh your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your king.

Thus says Yahweh who makes a way in the sea and a path through the mighty Waters 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. Do not remember, the former things nor consider the things of old 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. The beasts 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. This people I have formed for myself. Shall declare. My prayers. So far, the reading of gods inspired. An errant work. Well, there is a spiritual pandemic. The Nations. Uh, have made molded images for themselves. They have worshiped, those who are not gods.

And the Lord refers to them as deaf and blind. Sadly, however, This is something that has also applied to Israel. Because even though the Lord has sent them, Isaiah, you remember, even from the call of Isaiah, he would preach, but they would have eyes, and not see, and ears.

And not hear, they would have hearts and they would not understand. And so the one nation that actually had the word of God was not being. Witness unto God. The one who is his servant? He says My servants. The blindest of all of them. My messenger is the deafest.

The most deaf of all of them doesn't mean God's word isn't true. It means God's word is true. And so verse 21 of Isaiah 42, God exalts, the law and makes it honorable, but But what does that mean? For Israel? It means that God brings what he said in his word to pass, and that Israel is exiled.

That they are the ones who are this, robbed and plundered, and imprisoned people. Just as when the Apostle is dealing with. Uh, with the same issue in Romans chapter 3, even before we get to Romans chapter 9 and what has happened to Israel there. But you remember already in Romans chapter 3, there are unbelieving Jews and uh, does their unbelief.

Nullify or indicate that the word of God was not having the Was not truthful and effective. He said no let God be true. And every man a liar and that's the case here in Isaiah, 42 and 43. Not just the Nations. But Israel, who have Israel, who have the truth of God?

Uh, are liars even though God is true. So there's the spiritual Pandemic. God is the one who is punishing Israel. According to his word. He says in the closing verses of Isaiah, 42, and sadly, they were so dull to his word. So not believing him or his word, that they didn't even see that.

So the Lord is poor at the end of the chapter in 42. He's pouring out the fury of his anger and they don't even see or take to heart that they are being judged for their idolatry that they're being judged for our sin. This is something that we should always remember the flesh that remains in us has an almost inexhaustible capacity for dullness towards God and it is one of his great mercies whenever he gives us.

Standing of his word, any understanding of himself, any understanding of ourselves, he is graciously. Overpowering. Uh, that which is within us. The blindness, the deafness Um, dullness of heart that is within us and it's something we should be continually asking him for For Spiritual sight, spiritual hearing Uh, spiritual Understanding.

And the Lord. Uh, promises in the opening verses of chapter 43 the Divine cure For the spiritual pandemic. First of all, for Israel. Uh, when he says in these wonderful. Um, versus some of which have been immortalized. The well-known hymn how Firma Foundation when he passed through the waters.

I'll be with you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not burn. In this case, its Waters that are That are analogous to the flood and God's Judgment of Wrath. And the flood it's fire, that is analogous to hell and God's Judgment of Wrath in. Hell, he's talking about the Exile, he's talking about the punishment of the nation, for their own sin against the worship of God, and the word of God that he had given them.

And he had not given to the other peoples and still, they turned to idols. And still, they were hard against him. But how great is the electing love of God? That for the sake of those, whom he is redeeming from Israel. And for the sake of those whom he is going to redeem from the Nations that even in that water.

And that fire. Will be restraining, the the extent of the punishment so that it is, it is unable to turn back, his electing redeeming purpose. And he is reminding them that this is really how they began as a nation. That what he did in world history at the time with Egypt and Ethiopia and siba, which at the time of The Exodus were the world Powers Egypt.

Especially while he was doing in the world powers was especially for the sake of his people whom he was redeeming his people from whom and by whom he was bringing Christ into the world, his people unto whom he was giving his word and so this tiny people who were not great and they were not good.

Were wicked in their hearts against God and yet, God saved them because it pleased him to do. So, he saved them because of his electing love. And so he says, 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.

And so he says, I'm still doing that now, here is Babylon, which seems so powerful, and they have overtaken Assyria and then Persia is going to come and overtake Babylon. And he says, what I'm doing in the world. Is focused, especially on those whom I am redeeming, not just from Israel.

But even from the Nations, because not only is the Lord himself. The only cure for the spiritual pandemic is word by itself. Just hearing his word, that's not the cure. That's what Israel had and there's still blind, deaf and dull. But it's the Lord himself. Blessing the word to the particular individuals upon, whom he set this electing redeeming love, just like we've seen Uh, in Romans, especially These last few chapters chapter 9, 10.

11. And so also the same thing, the same thing here. And so he is going to retrieve his people from their Exile. They are still blind and deaf. In verse 8, but the Lord is going to make them Witnesses. The Nations can't be witnesses to God's grace and God's mercy.

They don't have his word. And so the Lord is going to retrieve his people from Exile and he's going to give them sight and he's given give them hearing and he's going to give them understanding but he's going to give them speaking. One of the reasons that he's redeeming those elect Israelites is so that they will be able to witness to the, to the idolatrous nations of the world of the one who is Creator.

And the one who is Redeemer, the one who is the only savior of Sinners. So we are not only to look to the Lord to give us sight to give us hearing, to make our hearts responsive to him. We are to look to the Lord, to remind us that we exist.

Or we're redeemed, not only for his praise and for his glory, but also to be those who testify to the one true God the Creator, the Redeemer through Jesus Christ because Those whom he saves, he turns into This Witnesses, his servants chosen, not only to know and believe and understand who the Living God is verse 10.

But to be able to announce this, Also to others that there is only one God, and there is only one savior, they are to be and we having now been saved along with them. Are to be his Witnesses. That what he does, no one can undo. And so we have this Evangelistic Duty.

The world is very impressed with themselves Babylon, the Chaldeans verse 14. Rejoice in their ships. They say, aha. See. We can we can make it along on those Seas, but it's similar to Uh, Psalm 104 where, you know, the the Seas are God's great creation and man is able to Traverse them by his great ships.

And then in the very next verse Leviathan, Leviathan is there and God makes him to play. And of course, Leviathan destroys a ship with a flick of his tail, and he's not intimidated by the Sea, the way men in their ships are intimidated by the Sea and here Very similar thing.

The galdeans rejoiced in their ships verse 14. But Yahweh the Holy One the creator of Israel. The king. What does he do? He makes a path through the sea. And he says, uh, he says now he closes off the section by referring back to The Exodus, but referring to the back to the Exodus as the beginning.

Of his power. Uh, not just Parting the sea in a temporary way, but making a road through the sea making. A road through the Wilderness. He reminds us that man is this bruised Reed that is easily broken this A smoldering Wick. That is so easily, quenched, and that The, the reference.

Verse 17 back to the servant. Who is Christ? Who is going to be? So gentle in his great power. Uh but he says you thought it was a big deal when rocks gushed water for Israel and The Exodus. What God is doing in the ongoing. Work of Salvation isn't just a little trickle of water.

From a rock, he can speak into existence a river of water. In the, in the desert. And in the wilderness verse 19. And verse 20, He makes himself a people, whom he is redeeming, and the greatest. Uh, the greatest Miracle of all is right there at the end of verse 21 they shall Declare my praise because ultimately after all God did for Israel, did they declare his praise, were they Witnesses to the Nations?

Did Were they those by whom the Creator and Redeemer in the seed of the woman. Jesus Christ were announced to all the families of the earth. Who would be saved through the Seed of Abraham did did Israel do that? No, they didn't. They became idolaters like the rest of the Nations even though they had the word of God and his worship.

And so, God says, Uh X The Exodus is a reminder of my saving power but don't look back to that and say oh if only God would do that again. Now he says look forward look for Don't remember the former things I will do a new thing. He says, in verse 18 and 19.

And the Conclusion to that new thing is that there will be this people whom he saves that declare his praise And so it's very similar then to what Jesus says. When he says that those who believe in him will do greater Works than these, you remember, Uh, Jesus having preached to many.

And yet, despite The great commotion and Um and excitement and the multitudes during the time that Jesus ministered on on Earth, very few genuine converts from his Earthly Ministry. And he says that greater things than these will be done by the apostles and you see The multitudes have been brought in and he's still doing that.

More professing Christians literally on the Earth. Uh, now Uh, then there were in the first 19th centuries. Of the history of the church through the missionary explosion. Since the middle of the 19th century and through what the Lord is doing even now. And so he says don't look back, there's a crescendo to the Lord's work in history, but understand that there is a spiritual pandemic in the world.

Even those in the church, need not just the worship of God, and the word of God, but the god of the worship, and the god of the word. To give them sight to give them hearing to give them understanding, he himself is the cure. And when he saves us, he gives us an Evangelistic Duty.

To tell forth, his praise, not only unto him in worship, but unto the rest of the needy guilty, condemned world in witness, So, let Uh, let us seek from God that his Spirit would convince us of our duty to worship and our duty. To witness. Let's pray. Our gracious God in our heavenly Father we thank you for this portion of your word.

We thank you that what you said here came true you did gather them from the Exile and even more than that you did Gather and redeem for yourself, a people from the Nations him you make, and to worshipers and Witnesses. Thank you for saving us. Thank you for giving us.

Not just your word and your worship, but the ministry of your spirit, to bring your word home, to our hearts, forgive us, and help us. We pray for there is so much blindness and so much deafness that remains in us. And we see, even in this passage To which we are still greatly prone.

But you o God are our hope and you are our help and we pray that your spirit would make us worshipers and witnesses worshipers unto, you and Witnesses unto. Those who need To be saved by you.

We pray. Oh God. In all of our requests, through the name of your son. Our Lord Jesus. Amen.