

“God Is with His People”  
Isaiah 41:1-10

October 24, 2010

A. Introduction

1. the cry of the heart in times of darkness
2. A message to God’s people
  - a. in that day, exiled in the heathen land of Babylonia
  - b. in this day, living in a heathen world

B. The Heathen

1. God’s Challenge to them
  - a. the summoning<sup>A</sup> (41:1)
  - b. the conqueror<sup>B</sup> (41:2-3)
  - c. the one responsible (41:4)
2. How the Heathen Nations Respond
  - a. fear, near (41:5)
  - b. help, encouragement (41:6)
  - c. idols (41:7)

C. God’s People – His Chosen Servant<sup>C</sup>

1. Inheritance<sup>D</sup> (41:8 – But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend)
2. Experience<sup>E</sup> (41:9 – You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, ‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.)
3. Prospect (41:10 – Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.)

D. Conclusion

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<sup>A</sup> Compare God’s words to Israel, Isaiah 1:18  
<sup>B</sup> Also Isaiah 41:25, culminating in naming him, Isaiah 44:28-45:1

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<sup>C</sup> The section Isaiah 41-48 called ‘The Servant Songs’  
<sup>D</sup> Deuteronomy 7:7  
<sup>E</sup> Genesis 11:28-31, 15:7

—{1}. **Isaiah 41:1-10** . . . . . **God Is with His People**

A. Introduction

1. Daddy, Are You There?—{2}.

- a. A little girl and her father were returning from the funeral of their dearly loved mother and wife. Some kind neighbours invited them to spend a few days with them so they wouldn't be alone in the house with all its sad memories. However, the father decided it would be better to go home.
- b. That night the father placed the little girl's bed next to his, but neither could fall asleep. Finally the child said, 'Daddy, it's dark, I can't see you. But you're there, aren't you?'
- c. 'Yes, dear, Daddy's here right next to you. Go to sleep.'" The little one finally dropped off to sleep.
- d. In the darkness and the depth of sorrow, the father in tears said aloud, 'O Heavenly Father, it's so dark, and my heart is overflowing with sorrow. But You're there, aren't You?'
- e. in the uncertainties of this life, what a comfort to a child to know that Daddy or Mommy is there!

2. What a comfort to know that our Heavenly Father God is there

- a. within a century or so of the writing of this chapter
  - (A) the people of God, Israel,
  - (B) both the northern and southern kingdoms
  - (C) were going to be in exile in the pagan land of Babylon
  - (D) apparently forgotten and abandoned by their God
- b. Isaiah 41, and particularly verse 10
  - (A) where God speaks to Israel: 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'
  - (B) is written to give assurance to the people of God,
    - (1) that their God still cares for them
    - (2) that our Heavenly Father is still there

3. Our text today is Isaiah 41:1-10

- a. the first 7 verses deal with the heathen
  - (A) with God speaking directly to them in verses 1 to 4
  - (B) and verses 5 to 7 being a prophetic word about what is going to happen to them for ignoring God's warning
- b. in verse 8, God turns to speak to Israel, His own people, giving assurance to them, describing how He views them
- c. let us first consider what God has to say to ...

## B. The Heathen

### 1. God's Challenge to them

41:1-4

- a. God summons them into His presence, verse 1: *Coastlands, listen to Me in silence, And let the peoples gain new strength; Let them come forward, then let them speak; Let us come together for judgment.*
  - (A) literally, the verse opens, 'Be silent unto me O islands'
  - (B) a command that conveys more than the simple words
    - (1) that those being called must listen
    - (2) that the One speaking is the One in charge
  - (C) the islands, or coastlands, are those nations to the west of Israel whose territories were bordered by the Great, or Mediterranean, Sea – pagan, heathen nations
  - (D) and God allows them to do four things, if they can
  - (E) *let them gain new strength* – the same words as used in the preceding verse of God's people – they '*will gain new strength*' – Israel will exchange its weakness for God's strength – can these heathen do the same?
  - (F) *let them come forward* – God has an open door policy to His own people; can these nations approach him?
  - (G) *let them speak* – God's people have the vehicle of prayer to lay their problems before Him; what have the pagan nations to say to the Creator God?
  - (H) *let us come for judgment* – God has provided the same invitation to His people, a way of reconciliation: '*Come now, and let us reason together,*' Says the LORD, '*Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.*' (Isaiah 1:18) – will the nations pay heed?

- (I) that they might be encouraged to respond, God tells these nations what He is going to do:
- b. He is raising up a new conqueror, verses 2 and 3: <sup>2</sup> 'Who has aroused one from the east Whom He calls in righteousness to His feet? He delivers up nations before him And subdues kings. He makes them like dust with his sword, As the wind-driven chaff with his bow. <sup>3</sup> He pursues them, passing on in safety, By a way he had not been traversing with his feet.'
- (A) with these words, a new, mysterious person is brought upon the scene – one raised up from the east
- (B) in verse 25, we are told he is 'one from the north'
- (C) and in this fashion there is introduced one who will, like the kings of Assyria and Babylon before him, carry out unbeknownst to himself, the work of God
- (D) a man, of whom we will gradually learn more in the coming chapters, until at the end of chapter 44, he is named by Isaiah a century before his birth!
- (E) he is Cyrus, son of Cambyses, and king of Persia, being also, from what we can tell, of the royal family of the Medes – a man chosen by Xenophon, the Greek historian, as the model of a virtuous ruler
- (F) of Cyrus, who swept from both Media (to the north) and Persia (to the east) across and past the Babylonian empire, we learn more in the books of Chronicles, Ezra and Daniel, particularly in Nebuchadnezzar's dream,
- (1) where Babylon was depicted as the head of gold, an empire of unrivalled splendour
- (2) the silver arms, shoulders, and chest were the following empire, though lesser in splendour, would be greater in extent
- (3) and it would be followed by a still less splendid empire, represented by bronze; and so on
- (G) « show maps of empires » – these maps will help us to appreciate what God was going to do through Cyrus
- (H) Cyrus swept past Babylon's empire to extend his empire into the coastlands, even to European Greece
- c. who is responsible for all this? verse 4: 'Who has performed and accomplished *it*, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? "I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last. I am He."' – God answers His own question
- (A) Yahweh, the faithful, caring God of Israel has done it!

- (B) not as an after-thought, but as planned from the very beginning, and working history toward these events
- (C) and how will those coastlands hearing this respond?

## 2. How the Heathen Nations Respond

41:5-7

- a. Yes, They Fear and Come Near, verse 5: *The coastlands have seen and are afraid; The ends of the earth tremble; They have drawn near and have come.*
  - (A) this sounds positive
  - (B) they are paying attention
  - (C) but, read on:
- b. They Help and Encourage *Each Other*, verse 6: *Each one helps his neighbor And says to his brother, 'Be strong!'*
  - (A) they may fear; they may tremble
  - (B) but they do not go to the True God for help
  - (C) it still the same with those outside of Christ today
  - (D) there is fear of what is happening in the world
  - (E) fear of sickness, fear of disaster, fear of death
  - (F) but, like the nations that were around Israel – who had witnessed the work of God through the centuries – they see God at work in the midst of His people
  - (G) they think not of repentance, rather than turning away
- c. They Turn Back to Their Hand-made Idols, verse 7: *So the craftsman encourages the smelter, And he who smooths metal with the hammer encourages him who beats the anvil, Saying of the soldering, 'It is good'; And he fastens it with nails, So that it will not totter.*
  - (A) with mutual admiration they admire their handiwork
  - (B) hands that are helpless before Cyrus' advance
  - (C) are supposed to fashion gods to help
- d. you may have heard the expression '*as rich as Croesus*'
  - (A) Croesus was the king Lydia in western Asia Minor at that time, who had conquered much of Asian Greece
  - (B) he sought alliances with Babylon and other nations – the encouragement of friends was of no help

- (C) he sent around to all the oracles of the heathen gods for advice and help – the idols did not help
- (D) Cyrus conquered him in his very capital, Sardis
- e. so now God now turns to speak to His own, to ...

C. God's People – They Are His Chosen Servant

41:8-10

1. Their Inheritance, verse 8: *But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My friend*

- a. this chapter begins what are called the 'Servant Songs' in the book of Isaiah – here God discloses His purposes that He will achieve through His servant
  - (A) In one, sense, Cyrus King of Persia, is His servant: doing His bidding, accomplishing His purpose
  - (B) but Israel, the nation, the visible people of God, is also His servant – has been His servant from the beginning when God called Abraham out of Ur
  - (C) and, we shall see, there is coming one out of the nation of Israel, One who is The Servant, *par excellence*, the Suffering Servant, the Messiah, the Redeemer
- b. these are servants because God chose them as such
  - (A) God chose Cyrus to be His servant to accomplish one step in His purpose of redeeming His people
  - (B) God chose Israel out of sheer grace: neither Jacob nor the nation descending from him were particularly attractive – '*The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples*' (Deuteronomy 7:7) – a stiff necked people until One came who is the True Israel – « I have used this diagram before as an illustration of how the chosen people of God narrows down until it is found in one True Israel, Christ on the cross, and widens out thereafter to include all those who are in Christ Jesus by faith. »
- c. the privilege of being chosen as a servant
  - (A) finds its highest expression in that word '*friend*'
  - (B) literally it is '*my lover*' or '*loving me*'
    - (1) it could mean the one that loves God, or,
    - (2) equally well, the one who loves God
    - (3) in either case, the result is the same
  - (C) it is a love relationship

- (1) between God and Abraham
- (2) between God and Israel
- (3) between the God Father and the obedient Son
- (4) between the Jesus Christ and His church
- (D) this love relationship has been demonstrated by ...

2. Their Experience, verse 9: *You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its remotest parts And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.'*

- a. the experience started centuries before
  - (A) in Ur of the Chaldees, a town near the Persian Gulf
  - (B) a place at the end of the earth compared to Jerusalem
  - (C) whence God called Abraham to leave his home
  - (D) and travel, depending only upon God, to a place which he had never seen: Abraham trusted God and went
- b. the promises of gracious love made to Abraham were then relayed on to his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob
- c. from generation to generation God watched over them
  - (A) delivering them from Egypt
  - (B) and later from the nations that surrounded them
  - (C) reprimanding them when they wandered into idolatry
  - (D) blessing them when they sought God's face
  - (E) because they were the people whom He had chosen to make a name for Himself
  - (F) and for His Name's, though they were stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart, repeatedly disobedient
    - (1) he did not reject them
    - (2) he did not cast them away from Himself
- d. in the words of the testimony of many a Christian, they could say, 'we have failed our God many times, but He has never failed us.'
- e. on which account God can set before them this,

3. Their Prospect, verse 10: 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'
- a. Cyrus' coming was time of terror for the heathen
    - (A) but it was not to be so for the people of God
      - (1) in point of fact, Cyrus was to be their deliverer
      - (2) but that is another story for another day
    - (B) they are not to fear, because it is one servant of God, Cyrus, who is carrying out God's purposes to bring deliverance for another servant of God, Israel
    - (C) and God gives to them in their troublous times
      - (1) just as he does to us in our troublous times
      - (2) solid, factual reasons we need not fear
      - (3) so that the people of God of all ages can say
  - b. 1. 'we can be assured because God is with us'
    - (A) we have covered a lot of chapters since we read the promise of the birth of the child, of Immanuel
    - (B) but the promise that God is with His people still stands
    - (C) the repeated promise given of the blessedness of the people of God is that His Presence is ever with them
  - c. 2. 'we need not be anxious because ours is the true God'
    - (A) the Creator God who spoke the universe into being
    - (B) the covenant God of the nation of Israel
    - (C) the God of the new covenant through faith in Christ
    - (D) He who alone is God, is our God; my God; your God
  - d. 3. 'our God cares: He strengthens, He helps His people'
    - (A) the mark of God's caring is His intervention in our life
    - (B) when we are weak, He gives strengths
    - (C) when things appear helpless, He can help
  - e. 4. 'we are protected by Our God's justice and power'
    - (A) God says He will uphold us: stand us up, hold us up
    - (B) when the enemy comes in as a flood, he raises us up
    - (C) the right hand is the hand of power; God's all power

(D) but a righteous power, providing justice to His people

D. Conclusion

1. like that little girl and her father
  - a. on the loss of a mother and a wife
  - b. sometimes in the dark times you and I may feel all alone
  - c. and in anxiety, cry out, O Father God, are you there?
2. and His voice ever answers, 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.' – these are the words of the God of our salvation. Be assured in these words.

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ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
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NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
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