

August 14

Scriptures: Read Isaiah 42, 43 & 44

Key Verse: “I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another...”
(Isaiah 42:8)

Overview

From the outset, chapter 42 is clearly Messianic. The “Servant” of the Lord is now identified as a person rather than the nation as a whole, giving a new and exciting element to Isaiah’s Messianic-Servant prophecies (chs. 42-45). Ancient Jewish commentators found the passages in this subsection baffling, yet most of them regarded it as Messianic. However, when Jesus Christ came in fulfillment of these prophecies, He shed light on their meaning. The New Testament declares that He fulfilled it, (Matt. 12:17-21) and those who refuse to see it are spiritually blind.

Chapter 42 begins by alluding to Jesus’ baptism, when God’s Spirit descended upon Him and the divine voice declared His “delight” with Jesus, God’s “Elect”, meaning one who is chosen for a specific purpose (Matt. 3:16-17; 17:5; Isa. 11:2). Isaiah continues to give the ultimate purpose of Jesus’ coming: to be “a light to the Gentiles” (42:6; Luke 2:32) and to give them “justice”, which implies imparting to them His standards of holiness and truth as taught in the Gospel. Jesus was to accomplish this through His disciples and followers, for He came firstly to the lost sheep of Israel to fulfill His covenant promises and, in contrast to the ways of a powerful king, He came teaching humbly, quietly, and gently (42:2-3, 6). The Creator and Sustainer of life would uphold and support Jesus in His ministry and work of redemption, wherein He will give sight to the blind and set the prisoner free, both physically and spiritually (35:5; 61:1; Lk. 4:18, 21; Heb. 2:14-15). Jesus’ work will result in the creation of a “new song” and in praise to God from all people of the world who have received His salvation, and no power on earth will be able to stop the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (42:10-13).

Isaiah once again refers to the more immediate future promise of God to bring judgment upon the nation of Babylon that had taken Judah captive (42:15; 43:14-15). God stressed that it was He who purposed this just punishment upon His spiritually blind and deaf people because of their sins and disobedience to Him; their horrible sins included that of idolatry and hypocritical worship to God, which was even perpetrated by the priests and teachers of the law (42:14, 17-25; 43:22-28)

In chapter 43, the Lord poetically describes His love and providential care of His people whom He promised to redeem. The fact that God would accomplish their deliverance is so certain that it is spoken of as having already happened. After seventy years of captivity wherein God restrained Himself (42:14), He finally intervened to call His people from wherever the Babylonians had scattered them (43:5-6). He makes mention of the first time He redeemed His people in Egypt, when He made a path for them through the sea, and then extinguished the enemy. But now He says He will do a new thing by making a road in the wilderness and providing them with water so that His people might return to their homeland (43:16-21). When they see that God did indeed intervene on their behalf, they will be ashamed for having ever worshipped idols (42:17).

The Lord demanded that He alone receive the glory for bringing prophecies to fulfillment and for declaring the prophecies yet to be fulfilled. He will make certain that the glory due Him is not given to an idol, for none of the idolatrous gods have ever done, nor are even able to do, anything whatsoever (42:8-9; 43:9). It was not until the people of Judah had repented and forsaken idol worship that God brought them out, so none could say that another god had helped them. God is their only Lord and Saviour, the eternally-existent, all-powerful One who redeemed them. The Lord called upon His people to be witnesses to this fact (43:10-12), and He challenged the heathen nations by asserting that He was the only true God (43:9).

Chapter 44 is devoted to making this fact clear in the minds of the people of Judah. Knowing they would go into captivity in idolatrous lands, the Lord wanted to show them the folly and lack of understanding in worshipping a useless idol, which is made of the same wood with which they cook or keep warm, God wanted to reassure His people that He had indeed chosen them and promised them a blessed future with descendants that would experience the “Water” from God for their thirsty souls (John 4:13-14) and the outpouring of His Holy Spirit (44:3; Acts 2; Day of Pentecost).

Prayer

Lord God, grant that all our service to You will not be from any self-serving, personal ambition but only for Your glory. Be magnified in our lives today, dear Jesus.